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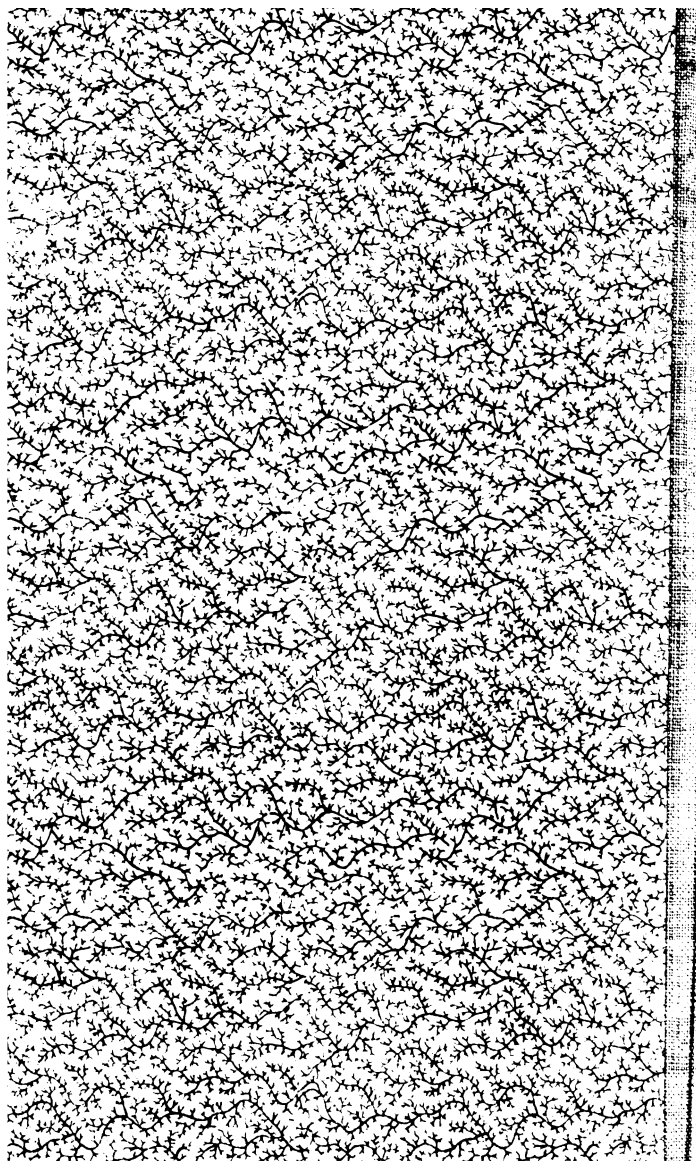
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De la Ram

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De la Ram

HELD IN BONDAGE
OR
GRANVILLE DE VIGNE.

A Tale of the Day.

BY "OUIDA."

Le Capitaine Rameé

"A young man married is a man that's married."
SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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GRANVILLE DE VIGNE.

PART THE FIRST.

I.

THE SENIOR PUPIL OF THE CHANCERY TRIES THE SAUCE PIQUANTE OF UNCERTAIN FATE.

THE water rushed beneath the keel, our oars dipped with regular harmony, the river-waves rippled and split, and the alders and willows tossed and waved in the sunshine, while we—private pupils, as our tutor called us, young men, as we called ourselves—used to pull up the Kennet as though we were some of a University Eight, and lunch at our favorite hostelry off raw chops and half-and-half, making, *faute de mieux*, rough, schoolboy-love to its big-boned, red-haired Hebe, happy as kings in those glorious summer days in the dead years long past and gone.

What a royal time it was—(what man among us does not say so with a sigh?)—when our hearts owned no heavier cares than a vulgus and a theorem, and no *arrièrepensée* mingled with our healthy boyish sports; when old Horace and Euripides were the only bores we knew, and the Galatæa at the pastrycook's seemed fairer than titled Helens now; when gallops on hired shying hacks were doubly dear by prohibition, and filthy bird's-eye, smoked

in barns, sweeter to our senses than purest Cubas smoked to-day on the steps of Arthur's or the U. S. Those were my happiest days, Heaven knows, though I've seen life as agreeably as any man could, and am not even yet as utterly blasé as one might expect. But just as, some twenty years hence, when I am gone down before the gout, and Purdey has grown too heavy, and my favorite entremets are interdicted, shall I look back to the present day with an envious sigh; so do I now often glance with a fond lingering regret to those merry boyish days when, with a handsome tip from the dear old governor, and a parting injunction respecting the unspeakable blessings and advantages of flannel from my mother, I was sent off to be a private pupil under the Rev. Josiah Primrose, D.D., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., and all the letters of the alphabet besides, I dare say, if I could but remember them.

Our modern Gamaliel was an immaculate and insignificant little man, who, on the strength of a double first, good connections, and M.B. waistcoats, offered to train up the sons of noblemen and gentlemen in the way they should go, drill Greek and instil religious principles into them, for the trifling consideration of 300*l.* per annum. He lived in a quiet little borough in the south of Berkshire, at a long, low, ivy-clad house called the Chancery, that had stupendous pretensions to the picturesque and the mediæval; and, what was of much more consequence to us, a capital little trout stream at the bottom of its grounds. Here he dwelt with a fat old housekeeper, a very good cook, a quasi-juvenile niece—who went in for the kitten line, and did it very badly, too—and four, or, when times were good, six hot-brained, wild-spirited, incipient men, worse to keep in order than a team of unbroke thoroughbreds. No great deal of authority, however, did our Doctor—in familiar parlance, “Old Joey”—attempt to exercise.

We had prayers at eight, which he read in a style of intoning peculiar to himself, more soporific in its effects than a scientific lecture or an Exeter Hall meeting, and dinner at six, a very good dinner, too, over which the fair Arabella presided, got up en grande tenue, and between those hours we amused ourselves pretty well as we chose, with cricket, and smoking, jack and trout, boating and swimming, rides on hacks such as job-masters let out to young fellows with long purses, and desperate flirtations with all the shop-girls in Frestonhills. We *did* do an amount of Greek and Euclid, of course, as otherwise the 300*l.* might have been jeopardized, but the Doctor was generally dreaming over his possible chance of the Bampton lectureship, or his next report for the Geological Society, and was as glad to give us our congé as we were to take it.

It was a mild September evening, I remember, when I first went to the Chancery. I had been a little down in the mouth at leaving home just in the best of the shooting season, and at saying good-by to my genial-hearted governor, and my own highly-prized bay, Ballet-girl; but a brisk coach drive and a good inn dinner never yet failed to raise a boy's spirits, and by the time I reached Frestonhills I was ready to face a much more imposing individual than "Old Joey." The Doctor received me in his library, with a suspicious appearance of having just tumbled out of a nap; called me his "dear young friend" on the first introduction; treated me to a text or two, ingeniously dovetailed with classic quotations; took me to the drawing-room for presentation to Arabella, who smiled graciously on me for the sake of the pines, and melons, and game my mother had sent as a propitiatory offering with her darling; and, finally, consigned me to the tender mercies of the senior pupil. That senior pupil was standing with his back to the fire and his elbows on the mantle-piece, smoking a short

pipe, in the common study. I could now, long as are the years between, sketch his picture as he looked then. He was but just eighteen, but even then he had more of the "grand air" about him than any one else I had ever seen. His figure, from its developed muscle, broad chest, slight as his form still was, and the show of strength in his splendidly moulded arm, might have passed him for much older, but in his face was all the spirit, the eagerness, the fire of early youth, the glow of ardor that has never been chilled, the longing of the young gladiator for the untried arena. His features were chiseled like statuary, and well-nigh as clear and pale; his mouth and nose were clear cut, proud, and firm; the lines of the lips exceedingly delicate and haughty; his eyes were long, dark, sometimes keen as a falcon's, sometimes lighting up with wonderful passion, sometimes laughing with a winning, mischievous archness if any witticism or satire crossed his mind; his brow was wide, high, and powerful; his head grandly set upon his throat: he looked altogether, as I told him some time afterward, very like a thorough-bred, high-mettled, yet sweet-tempered racer, who was longing to run in a faster race, and who would never allow, if he died to resist it, curb, or whip, or snaffle. Such was the senior pupil, Granville de Vigne, when I saw him first in the full glow of his eager, cloudless, fearless youth. He was alone, and took his pipe out of his lips without altering his position.

"Well, young one, what's your name?"

"Chevasney."

"Not a bad one. A Chevasney of Longholme?"

"Yes. John Chevasney's son."

"So you are come to be fleeced by Old Joey? Deuced pity! Are you good for anything?"

"Only for grilling a devil, and riding cross country."

He threw back his head, and laughed a clear ringing

laugh, and gave me his hand, cordially and frankly, for all his hauteur and his seniority.

"You'll do. Sit down, innocent. I am Granville de Vigne. You know *us*, of course. Your father rode with our hounds last January, and I dined at Assheton Smith's with him after the run, I remember. Very game old gentleman he seemed. I should have thought him too sensible to have sent you down here. You'd have been much better at Eton or Rugby; there is nothing like a public school for taking the nonsense out of people. I liked Eton, at the least; but if you know how to hold your own and have your own way, you can make yourself comfortable anywhere. The other fellows are out, gone to a flower-show, I think; I never attend such things myself, they're too slow. There is only one of the boys worth cultivating, and he's a very little chap, only thirteen, but he's a jolly little monkey; we call him Curly, from his dandy gold locks. His father's a peer"—and De Vigne laughed again—"one of the fresh creation: may Heaven preserve us from it! This Frestonhills is a detestable place; you'll be glad enough to get out of it. If it weren't for sport, I should have cut it long ago, but with a hunter and a rod a man can never be dull. Are you a good shot, seat, and oar, little one?"

Those were De Vigne's first words to me, and I answered them, honored and delighted with his notice, for I had heard many tales of him, living in the next county; how, at seven years old, he had ridden unnoticed to the finish with Assheton Smith's hounds; how, three years later, he had mounted a mare none of the grooms dare touch, and, breaking his shoulder-bone in the attempt to tame her, had shut his teeth like a little Spartan, that he might not cry out during the setting; how, when he saw his Newfoundland drowning in the mere, he had plunged

in after his beloved dog, and only been rescued just as both were sinking; the boy's arms round the animal's neck; and many more like tales of him, which showed him a true scion of his spirited, self-willed, noble-hearted race, and furnished food for gossip at dull dinners, three counties taking an interest in Granville de Vigne, of the manor of Vigne, heir-prospective to forty thousand a year.

I *did* know his family—the royal-sounding “Us.” I knew them by reputation for one of the proudest houses, with one of the strongest wills of their own, and one of the purest chains of male descent that ever English family possessed. They had been the seigneurs at Vigne ever since tradition could tell; their legends were among the country lore, and their names in the old cradle songs of rough chivalry and vague romance, handed down among the peasantry from generation to generation. Many coronets had lain at their feet, but they had courteously declined them; to say the truth, they held the strawberry-leaves in supreme contempt, and looked down not unjustly on many of the roturiers of the peerage.

De Vigne's father, a Colonel of Dragoons, had fallen fighting in India when his son was six years old; and the boy had been brought up by his mother, a woman as wise as she was gentle, who gave him the love on which he would one day be glad to rest, but sent him among men, to make him worthy of his line. How this high-spirited representative of a haughty house was living down in the dull seclusion of Frestonhills was owing to a circumstance very characteristic of De Vigne. At twelve years old his mother had sent him to Eton, a match in pluck and muscle and talent for boys five years his senior. There he helped to fight the Lords' men, pounded bargees with a skill worthy of the belt, made himself captain of the boats, enjoyed all the popularity and detestation that the boy with

the cleverest head, the strongest arm, the most resolute will, and the most generous temper among his confrères is certain to gain; and from thence, when he was seventeen, got himself expelled.

His dame chanced to have a niece—a niece, tradition says, with the loveliest complexion and the most ravissant auburn hair in the world, and with whom, when she visited her aunt, all Oppidans and Tugs who saw the beatific vision became straightway enamored. Whether De Vigne was in love with her, I can't say; he always averred *not*, but I doubt the truth of his statement, he being at all times inflammable on such points; at any rate, he made her in love with him, being already rather skilled in that line of conquest, and all, I dare say, went merry as a marriage-bell, till the dame found out the affair, was scandalized and horrified, and confiding the affair to the tutor, made no end of a row in Eton. She would have pulled all the college about De Vigne's ears if he had not performed that operation for himself. The tutor, having had a tender leaning to the auburn hair on his own account, was furious; and coming in contact with De Vigne and mademoiselle strolling along by the river-side, took occasion to tell them his mind. Now opposition, much less lecturing, De Vigne in all his life never could or would brook, and he and his tutor coming to hot words, as men are apt when they quarrel about a woman, De Vigne, seizing his master in his strong arms, gave him such a ducking for his impudence as Eton master never had before or since. De Vigne, of course, was expelled for his double crime; and to please his mother, as nothing would make him hear of three years of college life, he consented to live six months in the semi-academic solitude of Frestonhills, while his name was entered at the Horse Guards for a commission in the cavalry. So at the Chancery he domiciled himself,

more as a guest than a pupil, for the Doctor was a trifle afraid of his keen eyes and quick wit; his pupil knew twenty times more of modern literature and valuable available information than himself, and fifty times more of the world and its ways; but the Doctor, like all people, be their tendencies ever so heavenward, had a certain respect for forty thousand a year. De Vigne kept two hunters and a pack in Frestonhills. He smoked Cavendish under the Doctor's own windows; he read De Kock and Le Brun in the drawing-room before the Doctor's very eyes, (and did not Miss Arabella read them too, upon the sly, though she blushed if you mentioned poor "Don Juan!") he absented himself when he chose, and went to shoot and hunt and fish with some men he knew in the county; he had his own way, in fact, as he had been accustomed to have it all his life. But it was not an obstinate or a disagreeable "own way;" true, he turned restive at the least attempt at coercion, but he was gentle enough to a coax, and though he could work up into very fiery passion, he was, generally speaking, sweet tempered enough, and had almost always a kind word, or a generous thought, or a laughing jest, for us less favored young ones.

I had a sort of boyish devoted loyalty to him then, and he deserved it from me. Many a scrape did a word or two from him get me out of with the Doctor; many a time did he send me into the seventh heaven by the loan of his magnificent four-year old; more than once did fivers come from his hand when I was deep in debt for a boy's fancies, or had been cheated through thick and thin at the billiard-table in the Ten Bells, when De Vigne paid my debts, refreshed himself by kicking the two sharpers out of the apartment, and threatened to shoot me if I offered him the money back again. A warm-hearted reverence I had for him in those pleasant boyish days, and always have

had, God bless him! But fond as I was of him, I little foresaw how often in the life to come we two should be together in revelry and in danger, in thoughtless pleasures and dark sorrows, in the whirl of fast life and the din and dash of the battle-field, and the bitter struggle of mortal agony, when I first saw the senior pupil smoking in the study of the old Chancery at Frestonhills.

II.

"THE HEART IS A FREE AND A FETTERLESS THING."

ONE sunny summer's afternoon, while Old Joey dozed over his "Treatise on the Wise Tooth of the Fossil Human-bosh Ichthyosaurus," and Arabella watered her geraniums and looked interesting in a white hat with very blue ribbons, De Vigne, with his fishing-rod in his hand, looked into the study, and told Curly and me, who were vainly and wretchedly puzzling our brains over Terence, that he was going after jack, and we might go with him if we chose. Curly and I, in our adoration of our senior pupil, would have gone after him to martyrdom, I verily believe, with the greatest glorification, and we sent Terence to the dogs, (literally, for we shied him at Arabella's wheezing King Charles,) rushed in rapture for our rods and baskets, and went down with De Vigne to the banks of the Kennet. De Vigne had an especial tenderness to old Izaak's gentle art; it was the only thing over which he displayed any patience, and even in this he might have caught still more perch if he had not twitched his line so often in anger at the slow-going fish, and swore against them, for not biting,

roundly enough to terrify them out of all such intentions, if they had possessed any.

How pleasant it was beside Pope's

Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned,

rushing on its silvery course through the sunny meadow lands of Berkshire, lingering on its way beneath the checkered shadows of the interlacing branches of the oaks and elms that rival in their majesty of foliage their great neighbors the beech-woods of Bucks, dashing swiftly, with busy joyous song, under the rough-hewn arch of some picturesque rustic bridge, flowing clear and cool in the summer sun through the fragrant woodlands and moss-grown orchards, the stately forest trees of parks and pastures, the nestling villages and quiet country towns, and hawthorn hedges dropping their white buds into its changeful gleaming waves. How pleasant it was fishing for jack among our Kennet meadows, lying under the pale willows and the dark wayfaring tree with its white starry blossoms, while the cattle came down to drink up to their hocks in the flags and lilies and snowflakes fringing the river's edge; and the air came fresh and fragrant over the swathes of new-mown grass and the crimson buds of the little dog-roses. Half its beauty was lost upon us, with our boyish density to all appeals made to our less material senses, except upon De Vigné, who had even then a warm lover-like quickness of perception to all fair things nature could show him, which has never left him, though his life has chiefly passed in the excitement of cities and camps. Often he stopped to have a glance across the country as he stood trolling, spinning the line with much more outlay of strength and vehemence than was needed, landing every now and then a ten-pound pike, with a violent anathema upon it for having dared to dispute his will so long; while little Curly

lasily whipped the water, stretched full length on a fragrant bed of wild thyme. What a pretty child he was, too, poor little chap! more like one of the Pompadour's pages, or a boy-hero of the Trouvères, with his white skin and his violet eyes, than an every-day slang-talking, lark-loving English lad.

"By George! what a handsome girl," said De Vigne, taking off his cap and standing at ease for a minute, after landing a great jack that had given him no little trouble to capture it. "I'm not fond of dark women generally, but 'pon my life she is splendid. What a contour! What a figure! Do for the queen of the gipsies, eh? Why the deuce isn't she this side of the river?"

The object of his admiration was on the opposite bank, strolling along by herself, with a certain dignity of air and stateliness of step which would not have ill-become a duchess, though her station in life was probably a dress-maker's apprentice, or a small shopkeeper's daughter, at the very highest. She was as handsome as one of those brunette peasant beauties in the plains of La Camargue, with a clear dark skin that had a rich carnation glow on the cheeks, large black eyes, perfect in shape and color, if not in expression, a pure aquiline profile, and a form such as would develop with years—for she was now probably not more than sixteen or seventeen—into full Junoesque magnificence.

"By Jove! she is very handsome; and she knows it, too," began De Vigne again. "I have never seen her about here before. I'll go across and talk to her."

Go he assuredly would have done, for female beauty was De Vigne's weakness, but at that minute a short, square, choleric-looking keeper came out of the wood at our back, and went up to little Curly.

"Hallo, you there—you young swell; don't you know you are trespassing?"

"No, I don't," answered Curly, in his pretty soft voice.

"Don't you know you're on Mr. Tressillian's ground?" sang out the keeper.

"Am I? Well, give my love to him, and say I shall be very happy to give him the pleasure of my company at dinner to-night," rejoined Curly, imperturbably.

"You imperent young dog—will you march off this 'ere minute!" roared the bellicose guardian of Mr. Tressillian's right of fishing.

"Wouldn't you like to see me?" laughed Curly, flinging his march-brown into the stream.

"Curse you, if you don't, I'll come and take your rod away, you little devil," sang out the keeper.

"Will you, really? That'll be too obliging, you look so sweet and amiable as it is," said Curly, with a provoking smile on his pretty little face.

"Yes, I will; and take you up to the house and get you a month at the mill for trespass, you abominable little swell!" vowed his adversary, laying his great fist on Curly's rod; but the little chap sprang to his feet and struck his foe a vigorous blow with his childish white hand, which fell on the keeper's brawny form much as a fly's kick at the Apollo Belvidere. The man seized him round the waist, but Curly struck out right and left, and kicked, and struggled with such hearty good will, that the keeper let him go, but, keeping his hand on the boy's collar, was about to drag him up to the lord of the manor, Boughton Tressillian, whose house stood about a mile distant. But at the sound of the scuffle, De Vigne, intent on watching his beauty across the Kennet, swung round, and rushed up to Curly's rescue, the child being rather a pet of his, and De Vigne never seeing a fight between might and right without striking in with a blow for the weak one.

"Take your hands off that young gentleman," he said

with all his hauteur and impatience. "Take your hands off, do you hear? or I will give you in charge for assault."

"Will yer, Master Stilts," growled the keeper, purple with dire wrath. "I'll give *you* in charge, you mean. You're poaching—ay, poaching, for all yer grand airs; and I'll be hanged if I don't take you and the little uns, all of yer, up to the house, and see if a committal don't take the rise out of you, my game cocks."

Wherewith the keeper, whom anger must have totally blinded ere he attempted such an indignity with our senior pupil, whose manorial rights stretched over woods and waters twenty times the extent of Boughton Tressillian's, let go his hold upon Curly, and turned upon De Vigne, to collar him instead.

De Vigne's eyes flashed, and the blood mounted over his temples as he straightened his left arm and received him with a plant in the middle of his chest, with a dexterity that would have done no discredit to Tom Sayers. Down went the man under the scientific blow, only to pick himself up again and charge at De Vigne with all the violence of fury, which generally, in such attacks, defeats its own ends, and makes a man strike wildly and at random. The senior pupil had not had mills at Eton, and rounds with bargees at Little Surley, without becoming a boxer, such as would have delighted Lord William Lennox. He threw himself into a scientific attitude, and, contenting himself with the defensive for the first couple of rounds, without being touched himself, caught the keeper on the left temple, with a force that sent that individual down like a felled ox. There he lay, like a log, on the thyme and ground ivy and woodbine, till I fancy De Vigne had certain uncomfortable suspicions that he might have killed him. So he picked him up, gave him a good shake, and,

finding him all right, except decidedly sulky, frightfully vengeful, and full of most unrighteous oaths, though not apparently willing to encounter such another round, De Vigne pushed him on before him, and took him up to Mr. Tressillian's to keep his word, and give him in charge.

Weive Hurst, Boughton Tressillian's manor-house, was a fine, rambling, antique old place, with castellated walls and deep mullioned windows, its façade looking all the grayer and the older in contrast to the green lawn, with its graceful larches, silvery fountains, and brilliantly-filled flower-beds that stretched in front of it. The powdered servant that opened the door looked not a little startled at our unusual style of morning visit, but gave way, as everybody always did, before De Vigne, and showed us into the library, where Mr. Tressillian sat—a stately, kindly, silver-haired old gentleman. De Vigne sank into the easy-chair, wheeled for him, and opened the proceedings with that urbane courtesy and winning softness which, when joined to his aristocratic hauteur of appearance, won him the suffrages of all who saw him. He told his tale frankly and briefly; demonstrated, as clearly as if he had been a lawyer, our right to fish on the highway-side of the river, (an often disputed point for anglers,) and the consequent illegality of the keeper's assault; and Boughton Tressillian, open to conviction, though he *was* a county magnate and a magistrate, admitted that he had no right over that part of the Kennet, agreed with De Vigne that his keeper was in the wrong, promised to give the man a good lecture; and apologized to his visitor for the interference and the affront.

"If you will stay and dine with me, Mr. De Vigne, and your young friends also, it will give me very great pleasure," said the cordial and courteous old man.

"I thank you. We should have been most happy," re-

turned our senior pupil; "but as it is, I am afraid we shall be late for Dr. Primrose."

"For Dr. Primrose!" exclaimed Tressillian, involuntarily. "You are not——"

"I am a pupil at the Chancery," laughed De Vigne.

Our host actually started; De Vigne certainly did look very little like a pupil of any man's, but he smiled in return.

"Indeed! Then I hope you will often give me the pleasure of your society. There is a billiard-table in wet weather, and good fishing and rabbit-shooting, *faute de mieux*, in the fine. It will be a great kindness, I assure you, to come and enliven us at Weive Hurst a little."

"The kindness will be to us," returned De Vigne, cordially. "Good day to you, Mr. Tressillian; accept my best thanks for your——"

A shower of roses, lilies, and laburnums, pelted at him with a merry ringing laugh, stopped his valedictory harangue. The culprit was a little girl of three years old, standing just outside the low windows of the library—a pretty child, with golden hair waving to her waist, and no end of mischief in her dark blue eyes. Unlike most children, she was not at all frightened at her own misdemeanors, but stood her ground, till Boughton Tressillian stretched out his arm to catch her. Then she turned round and took wing as rapidly as a bird off a bough, with her gold hair streaming behind her, and her clear childish laughter ringing on the summer air. But De Vigne gave chase to the only child in his life he ever deigned to notice, justly thinking them, by-the-by, great nuisances; of course his steps brought him in a second up with her, let her run as fast as she might, and he led her prisoner to the library, holding the wide blue sash by which he had caught her.

"Here is my second captive, Mr. Tressillian—what shall we do to her?"

Boughton Tressillian smiled.

"Alma, how could you be so naughty? Tell this gentleman you are a spoilt child, and ask him to forgive you."

She looked up under her long black lashes half shyly, half wickedly.

"Signor, perdonatemi!" she said, with a mischievous laugh, in broken Italian, though how a little Berkshire girl came to talk Neapolitan instead of English I could not then imagine.

"Alma, you are very naughty to-day," said Tressillian, half impatiently. "Why do you not speak English? Ask his forgiveness properly."

"I will pardon her without it," laughed De Vigne. "There, Alma, will you not love me now?"

She pushed her sunny hair off her eyes and looked at him—a strangely earnest and wistful look, too, for so young a child. I suppose she was pleased with the survey, for she put her little fingers voluntarily into his hand. "Si, Alma vi ama!" she answered him with joyous vivacity, pressing upon him with eager generosity some geraniums the head gardener had given her, and which but a moment ago she had fastened into her little white dress with extreme admiration and triumph.

"Bravo!" said Curly, as, five minutes afterward, we passed out from the great hall door. "You are a brick, De Vigne, and no mistake. How splendidly you pitched into that rascally keeper! Wasn't it no end of a go?"

De Vigne laughed.

"It was a good bit of fun. Always stand up for your rights, my boy; if you don't, who will for you? I never was done yet in my life, and never intend to be."

With which wise resolution the senior pupil struck a fusee and lit his pipe, and we got home just in time to dress, and for De Vigne to hand Arabella in to dinner,

who paid him at all times desperate court, hoping, doubtless, to make such an impression on him with her long ringlets and bravura songs as might trap him in his early youth into such "serious" action as would make her mistress of Vigne and the long rent-roll. That Granville saw no more of her than he could help in common courtesy, and paid her not so much attention as he did to her King Charles, was no check to the young lady's wild imaginings. At eight-and-twenty, women grown desperate don't stick to probabilities, but fly their hawks at any or at all game, so that "peradventure they may catch one."

Weive Hurst proved a great gain to us. Boughton Tressillian was as good as his word, and we were at all times cordially welcomed there. Even us younger ones he liked to have, when the Doctor gave us permission, to shoot and fish and ride about his grounds, and lunch with him afterward on such Strasbourg pâtés and splendid wines as seldom fall even to "private pupils," much less to the lot of ordinary schoolboys, and was never happier than when De Vigne, who had only nominal leave to ask, went over there to dine with him. He grew extremely fond of our senior pupil, who, haughty as he could be at times, and impatient as he was at any of Old Joey's weak attempts at coercion, had a very winning reverential way with old people—played billiards, heard his tales of the times when he was a *lion* with the men of the gay Regency, and broke in his new colts for him, till he fairly won his way into Boughton Tressillian's heart. It was for De Vigne that the butler was always bid to bring the Steinberg and the 1815 port; De Vigne to whom he gave a mare worth five hundred sovereigns, the most beautiful piece of horse-flesh ever mounted; De Vigne who might have knocked down every head of game in the preserves if he had chosen; De Vigne to whom little Alma Tressillian, the old man's

only grandchild, and the future heiress, of course, of Weive Hurst and all its appanages, presented the darling of her heart—a donkey, minus head or tail or panniers.

But De Vigne did not avail himself of the sport at Weive Hurst so much as he might have done had he no other game in hand. His affair with Tressillian's keeper had prevented his going to make impromptu acquaintance with the handsome girl across the Kennet, but she had not slipped from his mind, and had made sufficient impression upon him to induce him to try the next day to see her again in Frestonhills, and find out who she was and where she lived, two questions he soon settled by some means or other greatly to his own satisfaction. The girl's name was Lucy Davis; whence she came nobody knew or perhaps inquired; but now she was one of the hands at a milliner's in Frestonhills, prized by her employers, young as she was, for her extreme talent and skill, though equally detested, I believe, for her tyrannous and tempestuous temper. The girl was handsome enough for an empress, and had a wonderful style in her when she was dressed in her Sunday silks and cashmeres, for dress was her passion, to be "a lady" her ambition—an ambition that would have scrupled at no means to gain its end—and all her earnings were spent in imitating the toilettes she assisted in getting up to adorn the rectors' and lawyers' wives of Frestonhills. "The Davis" was handsome enough to send a much older man mad after her, and De Vigne, after meeting her once or twice in the summer evenings, taking her solitary walks in the deep shady lanes of our green picturesque Berkshire, introduced himself to her, was very graciously received, accompanied her in her strolls, and—fell in love with her, as De Vigne, and, indeed, all his passionate and headstrong race before him, had a knack of doing with every handsome woman who came near him. We all of us

adored the stately, black-eyed, black-browed Lucy Davis, but she never deigned any notice of our boyish worship; and when De Vigne came into the field, we gave up all hope, and fled the scene in desperation. The Doctor, of course, knew nothing of the affair, though almost every one else in Frestonhills did, especially the young bankers and solicitors and grammar-school assistant-masters, who swore at that "cursed fellow at the Chancery" for monopolizing the splendid young milliner—especially as the "cursed fellow" treated them considerably *de haut en bas*. De Vigne was really in love, for the time being, with Lucy Davis; one of those hot, vehement, short-lived attachments natural to his age and character, based on eye-love alone, for the girl had nothing else lovable about her, and had one of the nastiest tempers possible, which she did not always spare even to him, and which, when the first glamour had a little cooled, made De Vigne rather glad than otherwise that his departure from Frestonhills was drawing near some two months after he had seen her across the Kennet, and would give him an opportunity to break with her he otherwise might have found it difficult to make.

How we envied him when the letter on "Her Majesty's Service" came which announced him as gazetted to the — P. W. O. Hussars. That same evening (De Vigne was about to leave the following noon, to stay a week or two with his mother, whom he loved tenderly and fervently) little Curly and I were strolling after dinner, having been sent with a message to a neighboring rector from the Doctor, riding by turns on Miss Arabella's white pony, talking over the coming holidays, "vacation," as Old Joey called them, and of the long, sunny future that stretched before us in dim golden haze, so near and yet so far from our young, longing eyes. I recollect how Curly (bless the boy!) sketched out his life, what a long, joyous life it was to be,

how full he was of trust and eagerness and glad, childish faith in the years that were to come! Poor little Curly!

"Halloa!" he began at last, interrupting himself in his discourse, as De Vigne's terrier jumped up upon us. Here's Punch! Where's your Master, eh boy? There he is, by Jove! Arthur, over the hedge yonder talking to the Davis. What prime fun! I wish I dared to chaff him."

Curly, being on the pony's back, could have a view over the hedge, which was denied to me; and when I climbed up the bank, and swung myself to a similar eminence by means of an elm-bough, I saw at some little distance, under an oak-tree, in a meadow through whose center the Kennet flowed—a favorite place with him to bring a book, and lie smoking in the woody shade—De Vigne and Lucy Davis in very earnest conversation, or rather, it seemed to me, altercation. De Vigne was switching the long meadow grass impatiently with his cane, his cap was drawn down over his forehead, and even at that distance I thought he looked pale and annoyed. The girl Davis stood before him, seemingly in one of those violent furies that reputation attributed to her, and by turns adjuring, abusing, and threatening him.

Curly and I stayed some minutes looking at them, for the scene piqued our interest, making us think of Eugène Sue and Dumas, and all the love scenes we had devoured when the Doctor supposed us plodding at the Pons Asinorum or the De Officiis; but we could make nothing out of it, except that De Vigne and the Davis were quarrelling; and an intuitive perception that the senior pupil would not admire any espionage made me descend from my elm branch, and Curly start off the pony homeward.

That night De Vigne was silent and gloomy in the drawing-room with Arabella and the Doctor; gave us young

ones but a brief "Good night," and shut his bedroom door with a clang; but the next morning he seemed all right again, as he breakfasted for the last time in the old Chancery.

"What a lucky fellow you are, De Vigne," said Curly, as he stood in the hall, waiting for the fly to take him to the station.

He laughed.

"Oh, I don't know! We shall see if we all say so this time twenty years. If I could foresee the future, I wouldn't. I love the glorious uncertainty; it is the only sauce piquante one has, and I can't say I fear fate very much."

How full of fearlessness and pride, spirit and eagerness, and high-mettled courage he looked as he spoke. And well he might at eighteen! Master, when he came of age, of a splendid fortune, his own guide, his own arbiter, able and certain to see life in all its most deliciously attractive forms, with strength of body, talents of a very high order, wit such as would make him in older years as brilliant a conversationalist as Talleyrand, a character fearless, generous, and noble, a face and a form sure to win his way among women; manners, muscle, and brain certain to make him courted and popular among men; truly, it seemed that he, if any one, might trust to the sauce piquante of uncertain fate!

There he went off by the express with his portmanteaus, lettered, as we enviously read, "Granville de Vigne, P. W. O. Hussars;" off with a *Punch* and a Havanna to amuse him on the way—to much more than Exeter Barracks—on the way to Manhood; to all its chances and its changes, its wild revels and its dark regrets, its sparkling champagne cup, and its bitter aconite lying at the dregs.

Off he went, and we, left behind in the dull solitude of academic Frestonhills, so solitary without him, watched the

smoke curling from the engine as it disappeared round the bend of a cutting, and wondered in vague schoolboy fashion what sort of thing De Vigne would make of Life.

III.

"A SOUTHERLY WIND AND A CLOUDY SKY PROCLAIM IT A
HUNTING MORNING."

"CONFOUND it, I can't cram, and I won't cram, so there's an end of it!" sang out a Cantab one fine October morning, flinging Plato's Republic to the far end of the room, where it knocked down a grind-cup, smashed a punch-bowl, and cracked the glass that glazed the charms of the last pet of the ballet.

The sun streamed through the oriel windows of my rooms in dear old Trinity. The roaring fire crackled, blazed, and chatted away to a slate-colored Skye that lay full length before it. The table was spread with coffee, audit, devils, omelets, hare-pies, and all the other edibles of the buttery. The sunshine within shone on pipes and pictures, tobacco-boxes and little bronzes, books, cards, cigar-cases, statuettes, portraits of Derby winners, and likenesses of modern Helens—all in confusion, tumbled pell-mell together among sofas and easy-chairs, rifles, cricket-bats, and skates. The sunshine without shone on the backs, so fair in spring, and still boasting a certain attractiveness, with their fresh turf, and graceful bridges, and outriggers pulling up and down the cold classic waters of the Cam, more celebrated, but far less clear and lovely, I must say, than our old, dancing rapid, joyous Kennet.

Everything looked essentially jolly, and jolly did I and

my two companions feel smoking before a splendid fire in the easiest of attitudes and couches, a very trifle seedy from a prolonged wine the night previous.

One of them was a handsome young fellow of twenty or so, a great deal too handsome for the peace of the masters' daughters, and of the fair patissières and fleuristes of Petty Cury and King's Parade, known on the rolls as Percy Brandling, second son of Lord Cashingcheque, (a Manchester man, who, having padded himself well with cotton, was rewarded for his industry, or his ingots, by the discerning nation with a spick and span new coronet,) alias "Curly," the self-same, save some additional feet of height and some fondly-cherished whiskers, as our little Curly of Frestonhills. The other was a man of five-and-twenty, his figure having gained in muscle and power without losing one atom in symmetry, showing that his nerve and strength would tell pulling up stream, or in a fast twenty minutes across country, or, if occasion turned up, in that "noble art of self-defense," now growing as popular in England as in days of yore at Elis, where, by the way, manly games found no better defender there than ours do here in our great statesman, long, I hope, to be our Premier, with his wonderful brain and his vernal heart. His features, delicately chiseled, had the stamp of a life full of wild pleasures and strong excitements, but his dark eyes had the fire and the glow of a man whose spirit is unchilled, whose passions have all the vehemence of youth, and to whom existence still offers all that makes existence attractive and worth preserving. As he lay back, swinging himself in a rocking-chair, looking into the *Times* and smoking his favorite Cavendish, the grand air, noticeable even in his boyhood, still more marked now, of course, that his years had been passed in some of the best society of Europe, the clear intellect on his brow and the keen wit on his lips yet

more distinguished from culture and contact with other minds, anybody would have known him in an instant, despite the lapse of time, to be Granville De Vigne, the senior pupil of the bygone days at the old Chancery.

"Cram?" he said, looking up as Curly spoke. "Why should you? What's the good of it? Youth is made for something warmer than academic routine, and knowledge of the world will stand a man in better stead than the quarrels of commentators and the dry demonstrations of mathematicians."

"Of course. Not a doubt about it," said Curly, stretching himself. "I find soda-water and brandy the best guano for the cultivation of my intellect, I can tell you."

"Do you think it will get you a double first?"

"Heaven forefend!" cried Curly, with extreme piety. "I've no ambition for lawn sleeves, though they *do* bring with them as neat a little income as any vessel of grace who lives on clover and forswears the pomps and vanities of this wicked world can possibly desire."

"No," laughed De Vigne; "*you'll* live in clover, my boy, trust you for that. But you won't pretend that you only take it because you're 'called' to it, and that you would infinitely prefer, if left to yourself, a hovel and dry bread. Don't cram, Curly; your great saps are like the geese they fatten for our *pâtés de foie gras*; they overfeed one part of the system till all the rest is weak, diseased, and worthless. But the geese have the best of it, for their livers do make something worth eating, while the reading-man's brains are rarely productive of anything worth writing. A man learns far more knocking about the world, keeping his eyes and ears open, making himself *au courant* with all the topics of the day, up to all the intellectual and philosophical discussions of his own time, than buried in the dusty tomes of a dead age, shut out from all actual and

practical life, a mere receptacle for the spiritless skeletons of abstruse studies, as the Pyramids for the tenantless coffin of a dead Cheops."

"Ah!" re-echoed Curly, with an envious sigh of assent. "I wonder whose knowledge is worth the most, my old coach, Bosanquet's, a living miracle of classic research, but who couldn't, to save his life, tell you who was Premier, translate '*Comment vous portez-vous?*' or know a Creswick from a Rubens, or yours, who can tell one everything that's going, know English and foreign politics by heart, have read everything that's readable in modern tongues, and have everything at your fingers' ends that one can want to hear about, from the last clause in the budget to the best make in rifles?"

De Vigne laughed. "Well, a man can't tumble about in the world, if he has any brains at all, without learning something; but, my dear fellow, that's all 'superficial,' they'll tell you; and it is atrociously bad taste to study leading articles instead of Greek unities. '*Chacun à son goût,*' you know. That young fellow above your head is a mild spectacled youth, Arthur says, who gives scientific teas where you give roistering wines, wins Craven scholarships where you get gated, and falls in love with the fair structure of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* where you go mad about the unfortunately more perishable form of that pretty little girl at the cigar-shop over the way. You think him a muff, and he, I day say, looks on you as an *âme damnée*, both in the French and English sense of the words. You both fill up niches in your own little world; you needn't jostle one another. If all horses ran for one cup only, the turf would soon come to grief. Why ain't you like me? I go on my own way, and never trouble my head about other people's vagaries."

"Why am I not like you?" repeated Curly, with a pro-

longed whistle. "Why isn't water as good as rum punch, or my bedmaker as pretty as little Rosalie? Don't I just wish I *were* you, instead of a beggarly younger son, tied by the leg in Granta, bothered with chapel, and all sorts of horrors, and rusticated if I try to see the smallest atom of life. By George! De Vigne, what a jolly time you must have had of it since you left Old Joey's!"

"Oh, I don't know," said De Vigne, looking into the fire with a smile. "I've gone the pace, I dare say, as fast as most men, and there are few things I have not tried; but I am not blasé yet, thank Heaven! When other things begin to bore me I turn back to sport, that never palls; there's too much change and verve and excitement in it, the only game, by the way, which does not lose its charm in losing its novelty. Wine one can't drink more than a certain amount of—I can't, at the least—without getting tired of it; women—well, for all the poets write about the joys of constancy, there is no pleasure so great as change *there*, and like the Paris Bohémien, one must go from brunes to blondes, from hazel eyes to blue, '*afin de varier les couleurs*;' but in sport one needs no change there; with a good speat in the river, or clever dogs among the turnips, or a fine fox along a cramped country, a man need never be dull; the ping of a bullet, the silver shine of a trout's back, the wild halloo of the finish, never lose their pleasure; one can't say as much for the brightest Rhenish that ever cooled our throats, nor the brightest glances that ever lured us into folly, though Heaven forefend that I should ever say a word against either the Falernian or the Floras of our lives!"

"You'd be a very ungrateful fellow if you did," said I, "seeing that you generally monopolize the very best of both."

He laughed again. "Well, I've seen life—I told you

little fellows at Frestonhills I trusted to my sauce piquante, and I must say it has used me very well hitherto, and I dare say it always will as long as I keep away from the Jews; for, while a man has plenty of tin, all the world offers the choicest hors d'œuvres and entremets for his dinner, till he is sick of them; though, when he has overdrawn at Coutts's, and is starving for a mouthful, his friends wouldn't offer him dry bread or picked bones if they knew it, to keep him out of the union! Be able to dine en prince at home, and you'll be invited out every night of your life—be hungry au troisième, and you must not lick the crumbs from under your sworn allies' tables, those jolly good fellows who have surfeited themselves at *yours* many a time over! Oh yes, I enjoy life; a man always can as long as he can pay for it."

With which axiom De Vigne rose from his rocking-chair, laid down his pipe, and stretched himself.

"It looks fine out yonder—shall we go and have a pull? Our boat club (you know I am stroke of the Grand Blue Jersey B. C.; there are lots of Eton fellows in it) think of challenging your University Eight for love, good-will, and a gold cup. We never do anything for *nothing* in England; if we play, we must play for money or ornaments. I should like to do the things for the sake of the fun, and the sport, and the triumph alone; but that isn't a general British feeling at all. Money is to us all that glory was to the Romans, and military success is to the French. Genius is valued by the money it makes; artists are prized by the price of their pictures. If the nation is grateful once in a hundred years, it votes a pension; and if we want to have a good-humored contest, we must wait till there are subscriptions enough to buy a cup, or a belt, or some other reward to tempt us. Well, come along, Arthur, let's have a pull to keep us in practice."

We accordingly had a pull up that time-honored stream, where Trinity has so often won challenge cups, and luckless King's so often got bumped, thanks to its quasi-Etonian idleness; where grave philosophers have watched the setting sun dying out of the sky, as the glories of their own youth have died away unvalued, till lost forever; where ascetic reading men have mooned along its banks blind to all the loveliness of the water-lily on its waters, or the rose-hued clouds above it, as they took their constitutional and pondered their prize essay; where thousands of brave, and eager, and fearless young hearts have dropped down under its trees in their little boats, dreaming over Don Juan or the Lotus-eaters, or pulled along straining every muscle and every nerve in the great boat race, or sauntered beside it in sweet midsummer eves with some other fair face upraised to theirs, long forgotten, out of mind now, but which then had power over them to make them oblivious of all things, even of proctors and rustication. We pulled along with hearty good will, aided by an arm which, could we but have had it, we thought, with regretful sighs, to help us in the University race, must have beaten Oxford out-and-out. The Brocas and Little Surley could have told you tales of that slashing stroke; and if, monsieur or madame, you are a "sentimental psychologist," and sneer it down as "animal," let me tell you it is the hand that is stroug in sport and in righteous strife that will be warmer in help, and firmer in friendship, and more generous in deed, than the puny weakling's who cannot hold his own.

"By George!" said De Vigne, resting at last upon his oar—"by George! is there anything after all that gives one a greater zest in life than corporeal exertion?"

A sentiment, however, in which indolent Curly declined to coincide. "Give me," said he, "a lot of cushions, a

hookah, a novel, and some Seltzer, and your 'corporeal exertion' may go to the deuce for me."

De Vigne laughed; though I dare say, but for the liking he bore him, the young English Sybarite would have had a sharp retort, for De Vigne was not over merciful on the present-day assumption in beardless boys of effeminacy, nil admirarism and blasé indifference to all things. He was far too frank himself for affectation, and too spirited for ennui; at the present, at least, his sauce piquante had not lost its flavor.

Yet he had seen life, as he had told us himself, in all its phases, both in the glare of the most brilliant footlights, and in the darkest gloom, behind its coarsely-painted scenes. But life had hitherto been full of dashing excitements and highly-tinted pleasures to him; the bien-aimés of fortune are usually the darlings of women, though we know their love is so disinterested; and no man finds the worse friends because he gives them first-rate wine, and prime Manillas, and lends them a cool hundred when they want it, never missing and never remembering it. Besides these adventitious advantages of wealth and position, De Vigne was a man sure to find life very pleasant, at least on his entrance to it; women delighted in the restless and vehement nature which yielded them a worship, if short-lived so much more passionate, than they found ordinarily in their lovers out of romances; and men were certain to like him for his candor, his high spirit, his fearless courage, his generous honor, and his intellect, clear, comprehensive, and stored with all the knowledge of the day.

He *had* seen life; he had hunted with the Pytchley, stalked royals in the Highlands, flirted with maids of honor, given suppers to premières danseuses, had dinners fit for princes at the Star and Garter, and petits soupers in cabinets particuliers at Véfour's and Tortoni's. He and

his yacht, when he got leave, had gone everywhere that a yacht could go; the Ionian Isles knew no figure-head better than his Aphrodite's; it had carried him up to salmon fishing in Norway, and across the Atlantic to hunt buffaloes and caribos; to Granada, to look into soft Spanish faces by the dim moonlight in the Alhambra; and to Venice, to fling bouquets upward to the balconies, and whisper to Venetian masks that showed him the glance of long almond eyes, in the riotous Carnival time. He had had a brief campaign in Scinde, where he was wounded in the hip, and tenderly nursed by a charming civil service widow; where his daring drew down upon him the admiring rebuke of his commanding officer, and won him his troop, which promotion had brought him back to England and enabled him to exchange into the — Lancers, technically the Dashers, the best *nom de guerre* for that daring and brilliant corps. And now De Vigne, who had never lost sight of me since the Frestonhill's days, but, on the contrary, often asked me to go and shoot over Vigne when he assembled a whole crowd of guests in that magnificent mansion, had now, having a couple of months' leave, run down to Newmarket for the October Meeting, and had come at my entreaty to spend a week in Granta, where, I need not tell you, we fêted him, and did him the honors of the place in no bad style.

"Crash! crash! went the relentless chapel bell the next morning, waking us out of dreamless slumber that had endured not much more than an hour, owing to a late night of it with a man at John's over punch and *vingt-et-un*; and we had to tumble out of bed and rush into chapel, twisting on our coats and swearing at our destinies as we went. The Viewaway, the cleverest pack in the easterly counties, though not, I admit, up to the Burton, or Tedworth, or Melton mark, met that day for the first run of

the season at Euston Hollows, five miles from Cambridge, and Curly, who overcame his love of the dolce on such occasions, staggered into his stall, the pink dextrously covered with his surplice, his bright hair for once in disorder, and his blue eyes most unmistakably sleepy. "Who'd be a hapless undergrad? That fellow De Vigne's dreaming away in comfort, while we're dragged out by the heels for a lot of confounded humbug and form," lamented Curly to me, as we entered. The readers hurried the prayers over in that sing-song recitative in favor with college-men, which is a cross between the drone of a gnat and the whine of a Suffolk peasant; it's meant to be, I presume, as indeed I think it's called, "intoning." We young fellows dozed comfortably, sitting down and getting up at the right times by sheer force of habit, or read Dumas or Balzac under cover of our prayer-books. The freshmen alone tried to look alive and attentive; we knew it was but a ritual, much such an empty but time-honored one as the gathering of Fellows at the Signing of the Leases at King's, or any other moss-grown formula of Mater, and attempted no such thing, and rushed out of chapel again, the worse instead of the better for the ill-timed devotions, which forced us, in our thoughtless youth, into irreverence and hypocrisy, a formula as absurd, as soulless, and as sad to see as the praying windmills of the Hindoos, at which those "heads of the Church," who uphold morning chapel as the sole safeguard of Granta, smile in pitying derision.

When I got back to my rooms I found breakfast waiting, and De Vigne standing on the hearth-rug tickling my Skye with his riding-whip, looking as gallant and as "game" in his scarlet bunting suit as any knight of old could do in hauberks and in mail, even if those gentry had been what Froissart and Commynes, when we read them for the first time, would fain make us think and hope.

Audit and hare-pie had not much temptation for us that morning. We were soon in saddle, and off to Euston Hollows; and after a brisk gallop to cover, we found ourselves riding up the approach to the M. F. H.'s house, where the meet was to be held. The house—or rather incongruous pile of Elizabethan architecture with Crystal Palace-like conservatories, which made it at once the idol and horror of the Archæological Society—stood well on a rising ground, (the only rising ground, you will say, in that flat county,) and the master of it, who had lately married as pretty a girl as any man could want to see, was slightly known to De Vigne, and well known to us, a frank, high-spirited, highly-cultivated man—en un mot, an English gentleman, in the perfection of those meaning words. The meet took place in an open sweep of grassland belted with trees, just facing the hall, and there were gathered all the men of the Viewaway, mounted on powerful hunters, and looking all over like goers. There was every type of the genus sporting man,—stout, square farmers, with honest bull-dog physique, characteristic of John Bull plebeian; wild young Cantabs, mounted showily from livery-stables, with the fair, fearless, delicate features characteristic of John Bull patrician; steady old whippers-in, very suspicious of brandy; wrinkled feeders, with stentorian voices that the wildest puppy had learned to know and dread; the courteous, cordial, aristocratic M. F. H., with the men of *his* class, the county gentry, rough, ill-looking cads, awkward at all things save crossing country; no end of pedestrians, nearly run over themselves, and falling into everybody's way; and last, but you are very sure, in our eyes, not least, the ladies who had come to see the hounds throw off at Euston Hollows.

De Vigne exchanged his reeking hack for his own hunter, a splendid gray thorough-bred, with as much light

action, he said, as a dansense, and as much strength and power as a bargeman. Then he and we rode up to talk to Mrs. L'Estrange, the M. F. H.'s wife, whom everybody called Flora, who was mounted on a beautiful little mare, and intended to follow her husband and his hounds over the Cambridge fences.

"Who is that lady yonder?" asked De Vigne, after he had chatted some moments with her.

"The one on the horse with a white star on his forehead? Lady Blanche Fairelesyeux. Don't you know her? She is a widow, and a very pretty and rich one, too."

"Yes, yes, I know Lady Blanche," laughed De Vigne. "She married old Faire two years ago, and persuaded him to drink himself to death most opportunely. No, I meant that very handsome woman there, talking to your husband at this moment, mounted on a chestnut with a very wild eye."

"Oh, that is Miss Trefusis!"

"And can you tell me no more than her mere name?"

"Not much. She is some relation—what I do not know exactly—of that detestable old woman Lady Fantyre, whose 'recollections' of court people are sometimes as gross anachronisms as the Comte de St. Germain's. They are staying with Mrs. St. Croix, and she brought them here; but I do not like Miss Trefusis very much myself, and Cecil—Mr. L'Estrange—does not wish me to cultivate her."

"Then I must not ask you to introduce me?" said De Vigne, disappointedly.

"Oh yes, if you wish. I know her well enough for that; and she dines here to-night with the St. Croix. But there is a wide difference, you know, between making passing acquaintances and ripening them into friends. Come,

Captain de Vigne, I am sure you will ride the hounds off the scent, or do something dreadful, if I do not let you talk to your new beauty," laughed the young mistress of Euston Hollows, turning her mare's head toward the showy chestnut, whose rider had won so much of De Vigne's admiration.

She was as dashing and magnificent in her way as her horse in his: a tall and voluptuously-perfect figure, which her tight dark riding-jacket showed in all the beauty of its rounded outlines, falling shoulders, and small waist, while her little hat, with a single white ostrich feather falling down and mingling with the dark massive braids of her hair, scarcely shadowed and did not conceal her face, with its singularly handsome features, clear aquiline profile, magnificent eyes, and lips by which Valasquez or Vandyke would have sworn, though they were too haughty, and too indicative of an imperious and unyielding nature to please me. Splendid she was, and she had spared no pains to make the tableau; and though, to a keen eye, her brilliant color, which was *not* rouge, and her penciled eyebrows, which *were* tinted, gave her a trifle of the actress or the lorette style, there was no wonder that De Vigne, impressive as a Southern by women's beauty—and at that time, as long as it *was* beauty, not caring much of what stamp or of what order—was not easy till Flora L'Estrange had introduced him to Constance Trefusis. So we rush upon our doom! So we, in thoughtless play, twist the first gleaming and silky threads of the fatal cord that will cling about our necks, fastened beyond hope of release, as long as our lives shall last! Constance Trefusis, surrounded as she was by the best men of the Viewaway, ruling them by force of that superb form and face—not by wit or conversation, for she had not overmuch of that, save a shrewd sarcastic rejoinder now and then—bowed very graciously

to De Vigne, and smiled upon him with her rose-hued lips. He had caught her eyes upon him once or twice before he had asked Mrs. L'Estrange who she was; and now, displacing the others with that calm, unconscious air of superiority, the more irritating to his rivals that it was invariably successful, he leaned his hand on the pommel of her saddle, and talked away to her on the chit-chat of the hour, which, however commonplace the subject, he knew how to treat so as to give it a piquance and an interest quite foreign to itself.

The Trefusis, as all the men called her, intended to follow the hounds, as well as L'Estrange's wife and Lady Blanche Fairelesyeux, (the little widow being well known in most hunting countries, and having more than once seen the finish in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire runs;) so De Vigne and his new acquaintance rode off together as the hounds, symmetrical in form, and all in good condition, though they *were* a provincial establishment, trotted away, with waving sterns and eager eyes, to draw the Euston Hollows covert. "Will Trefusis or Reynard win the day?" I wondered, as I saw De Vigne pay much more attention to the white teeth and oriental eyes of his handsome Amazon than to the fidgety gambols of his gray Berwick.

There was not long much doubt about it. The cheery "Halloo!" rang over coppice and brushwood and plantation, the white sterns of the dogs flourished among the dark-brown bushes of the cover, the mellow horn rang out in joyous triumph, stentorian lungs shouted out the delicious "Stole away!—hark for-r-r-rard!" and as the finest fox in the county broke away, De Vigne stuck his spurs into his hunter's flanks, and rattled down the cover, all his thoughts centered on the clever little pack that streamed along before him; and the whole field burst away over the low parterres and oak fences and ox-rails, across which the

fox was leading us. I dashed along the three first meadows, only divided by low hedges that a Shetland could have taken with all the excitement and breathlessness of a first start; but as we crossed the fourth at an easy gallop, cooling the horses before the formidable leap which we knew the Cam, or rather a narrow sedgy tributary of it, would give us at the bottom of it, I took breath, and looked around. Before any of us, De Vigne was going along as straight as an arrow's flight, working Berwick up for the approaching trial, never looking back, gone into the sport before him as if he never had had, and never could have had, any other interest in life. The Trefusis, riding as few women could, sitting well down in her saddle, like any of the Pytchley or Belvoir men, was some yards behind him, "riding jealous," I could see; rather a hopeless task for a young lady with a man known in the hunting-field as Granville was. The M. F. H. was, of course, handling his hunter like the masterly whip he was, his little wife keeping gallantly up with him, though she and her mare, so slight and so graceful were they, looked as likely to be smashed by the first staken-bound fence as a Sèvres figure or a Parian statuette. Curly, who, thanks to his half-broken hunter, had split four strong oak bars, and been once pitched neck and crop into Cambridge mud, was coming along with his pink sadly stained, but his pluck game as ever. Lady Blanche and four of the men were within a few paces of him, while the rest of the field were scattered far and wide: quaint bits of scarlet, green, and black dotting the short brown turf of the pasture land.

Splash went the fox into the sedgy water of this branch of classic Cam, and scrambled up upon the opposite bank. For a second the hounds lost the scent; then they threw up their heads with a joyous challenge, breasted the stream, dashed on after him, and sped along beyond the pollards

on the opposite side far ahead of us, streaming along like the white tail of a comet. De Vigne put his gray at the yawning ditch, but before he could lift him over it the Trefusis, striking her chestnut savagely, cleared it with unblanched cheek and unshaken nerve. She looked back with a laugh, not of gay girlish merriment, such as Flora L'Estrange would have done, but a laugh with a certain scorn and gratified malice in it, and he gave a muttered oath at being cut down by a woman as he landed his grey beside her, and dashed onward.

I cleared it, so did the M. F. H., and, by some species of sporting miracle, so did his wife and her little mare. Sworn to the chase as the gallant master of the Viewaways was, he could not help now and then turning his head with a word of admonition or advice to his plucky little Flora; a weakness for which I, being about half his age, and, consequently, much more up to life and steeled to women, regarded him with consummate contempt. One of the yeomen found a watery bed among the tadpoles, clay, and rushes—it might be a watery grave, for anything I know to the contrary—and poor dear Curly was tumbled straight off his young one, and he and his horse lay there, a helpless mass of human and equine flesh, while Lady Blanche lifted her roan over him, with a gay, unsympathizing “Keep still, or Mazeppa will damage you!”

The run had lasted but ten minutes and a half as yet, and the hounds, giving tongue in joyous concert, led the way for those who could follow them, over blackthorn hedges, staken-bound fences, and heavy-plowed lands, while the fox was heading for Sifton Wood, where, once lodged, we should never unearth him again. We could not see him, but the dogs never once lost scent, and on we went at a killing pace, De Vigne, happy fellow! riding on before any of us, even before the Trefusis, by two lengths.

Half a mile before Sifton Wood there was a cramped and awkward leap; a high, stiff, straggling hedge, with a ditch—confound the Cambridge ditches!—Heaven knows how wide, immediately before it, almost as bad as a Leicestershire bullfinch, a leap to tax a man's skill and his horse's powers, and which a woman might pardonably fear, with all the courage in the world. Absorbed as I was in working up my hunter for the leap, I looked to see if the Trefusis funk'd it. Not she; and she cleared it, too, lifting her chestnut high in the air, over the ugly blackthorn boughs; but on the other side the chestnut fell forward, and stumbled on his head, so they told me afterward. The courtly M. F. H. stopped to offer her assistance, but she waved him on. De Vigne (will he lose your liking, *mademoiselle*?) had forgotten his chivalry in the chase, and dashed straight on without looking back; while, picking up her hunter, the Trefusis remounted and rode forward with damaged habit but undaunted spirit. Lady Blanche's Mazeppa refused the leap; and with a little petulant French oath she rode farther down, to try and find a gap; and my luckless underbred one flung me over his head, rolling on his back, and looking piteous to the last extremity in his improvised couch of rushes, nettles, mud, and duckweed, and before either he or I could pick ourselves up and shake off the humiliating slough, the fox was killed, and the glorious whoop of triumph came ringing far over plantations and pastures, on the clear October air.

With not a few anathemas on the cruel fate that had shut me out from the honors of the finish, I rode through the gap lower down that Lady Blanche had found, and made my way to those luckier mortals who had had the glory of being in at the death. The brush had been awarded to De Vigne by the old huntsman, who might have given it to the Trefusis, for she was but a yard or two

behind him; but Squib had no tenderness for the sex; indeed, he looked on them as having no earthly business in the field, and gave it with a gruff word of compliment to Granville, who of course handed it to Miss Trefusis, but claimed the right of sending it up to town to be mounted in ivory and gold for her. That dashing Amazon herself sat on her trembling and foam-covered chestnut with the dignity and royal beauty of Cynisca, returning from the Olympian games; and De Vigne seemed to think nothing more attractive than this haughty, triumphant, imperial Constance, who had skill and pluck worthy a Pythchley Nestor. *I* preferred little Flora's girlish pity for the "poor dear fox," and her pathetic lamentation to her husband that she "dearly loved the riding, but she would rather never see the finish." However, as De Vigne said the morning before, *chacun à son goût*; if we all liked the same style of woman, where should we be? We rival and jostle and hate each other enough as it is about that center of all mischief, the beau sexe, Heaven knows!

We had another run that day, but it was a very slow affair. We killed the fox, but he made scarcely any running at all, and we might have scored it almost as a blank day but for our first glorious twenty minutes, one of the fastest things I ever knew, from Euston Hollows to Sifton Wood. Lady Blanche went back in ill-humor; missing that ditch had put the pretty widow in dudgeon for all day; but Flora L'Estrange and her little mare, which merited its name *Petite*, kept with us all the time, and Constance Trefusis—well, it's my firm conviction that Mazepa's gallop would not have tired that woman, and she rode, as De Vigne observed admiringly to me, with as firm a seat and as strong a hand as any rough-rider's. Excellence in his own art pleased him, I suppose, for he watched her more and more, and rode back to Euston Hollows with her

through the gloaming, some nine miles from where the last fox was killed, looking down on her haughty beauty with bold, tender glances.

PART THE SECOND.

I.

THE PATTE DE VELOURS STRIKES ITS FIRST WOUND IN THE ACADEMIC SHADES OF GRANTA.

L'ESTRANGE had bid us send our things over to his house, and make our toilettes there, after the day's sport; and after we had had what refection we preferred, (we had all scorned luncheon that morning, save the sherry Flora had drunk from her husband's flask and the cherry brandy the Trefusis had condescended to take out of De Vigne's, with a cigar from his case, after the Sifton Wood run,) we were glad to perform our ablutions, and get out of Cambridge mud into dinner toilettes. When at last we went down into the drawing-room, we found Constance Trefusis in black tulle, with crimson fuchsia and japonica flung here and there on the skirt, and crimson flowers on her superb jetty braids, sitting on an amber satin couch, queening it over the county men, a few college fellows or professors, and the borough and county members. There was Mrs. St. Croix and her two daughters, showy, flighty, hawked-about women, and the Gwyn-Erlens, fresh, nice-looking girls, with whom Mrs. L'Estrange seemed to fraternize immensely; and Lady Blanche, recovered from her ill-humor, and ready to shoot down any game, worth or not worth the hitting; and the Countess of Turquoise, who thought very few people knew what fun was, she told me, and instanced the dreary social torture called dining out;

and Mrs. Fitzrubric, a bishop's wife, staying in the neighborhood, who considered the practice of giving buns at school feasts sensual, but showed no disrelish for champagne and mock turtle; and there was that "detestable old woman," according to Flora, the Lady Fantyre, widow of an Irish peer, a little, shriveled, witty, nasty-thinking, and amusing-talking old lady, with a thin, sharp face, a hooked nose, very keen, bright, cunning, quizzical eyes, a very candid wig, and unmistakable rouge, who chattered away in a shrill treble of intimate acquaintance with court celebrities, some of whom, certainly, she could never have known, for the best of reasons, that they were dead before she was born, and who, having seen a vast deal of life, not all of the nicest, and picked up a good deal of information, passed current in nine cases out of ten, with her apocryphal stories and well-worn title, which covered, on disait, a multitude of sins, as coronets do and charity doesn't, but was "not visited" where her departed lord's rank might have entitled her to be, partly because she had a rather too marked skill at cards, chiefly, I have no doubt, because she had no heavy balance at any bank, the only bank from which she ever drew being the Homburg and the Baden, and was obliged to live by her wits, those wits being represented by the four honors and the odd trick. If poor old Fantyre had had a half million or so at Barclay's, I dare say the charitable world would have let her buy oblivion for all the naughty secrets hidden in her old wigged head!

"Diana turned to Venus, and no mistake," whispered Curly to me, as we looked at the Trefusis, her beauty heightened by her skill in her toilette, which was as tasteful as a Parisienne's, and would have chimed in with all M. Chevreul's artistic notions. De Vigne, the moment he entered, crossed over to her, and, seating himself, began to talk; and whether the lustrous gaze of his eyes, which

knew how to express their admiration, got their admiration returned, or whether she had wit enough to appreciate the superiority of his conversation, where the true gold of real sense and talent rang out in distinction to the second-hand platitudes and *Punch*-cribbed mots of the generality of people, I will not pretend to decide. At any rate, by some spell or other he distanced his rivals by many lengths, though I do not think, then, he cared very much about doing it, beyond liking to have the handsomest woman in the room to himself. They naturally spoke of the run of that morning, and Constance Trefusis, flirting her fan with stately movement, and turning her full glittering eyes upon him, asked, "Captain De Vigne, what do you think you did this morning that pleased me?"

De Vigne expressed his happiness that any act of his should do so.

"It was when we took that ditch by Sifton Wood, and my stupid chestnut fell with me. You rode on, and never looked back; your thoughts were with the hounds, not with me."

"You are more forgiving to my discourtesy than I can be to myself," smiled De Vigne. "What you are so generous as to pardon I cannot recall without shame."

"Then you are very silly," she interrupted him. "A man in a time of excitement or danger should have something better to think about than a woman."

"It is difficult, with Miss Trefusis before us, to think there *can* be anything better than a woman," whispered De Vigne.

She looked at him and smiled, too, with something of the malice in it as when she cleared the Cam before him—a smile that at once repulsed and fascinated, annoyed and piqued him. Just then the dinner was announced. L'Es-trange took away my bewitching Countess of Turquoise,

with whom, in five minutes, I had gone straight off into love for her beaux yeux. Curly led in Julia St. Croix, with whom he seemed wonderfully struck. Heaven knows why, except that young fellows will go down before any battered or war-worn arrows at times. Little Flora was victimized by Turquoise himself, a vain, dull, stupid owl, and wished, I believe, in her secret heart, that social laws allowed her to go in with her beloved Cecil, (she was very young, remember, madame; we do not expect any such bêtises from you;) and De Vigne gave his arm to the Trefusis, to whom he talked during all the courses with a dévouement that must have interfered with his proper appreciation of the really masterly productions of the Euston Hollows chef, and the very excellent hock and claret of L'Estrange's cellar. Whether he had much response I cannot say—I was too absorbed in looking at Lady Turquoise from far too respectful a distance to please me—I should fancy not, for the Trefusis was never, that I heard, much famed for conversation; but some way or other she fascinated him with her basilisk beauty, and when Flora gave the move she looked into his eyes rather warmly for an acquaintance not twelve hours old as yet. We were some little time before we followed them, for De Vigne and L'Estrange and the members got on the Reform Bill, and Granville and our host being the only two Liberals against a whole troop of Conservatives, they did not get off it again in a hurry; and though Lady Turquoise was bewitching, and the Trefusis' eyes magnificent, and the St. Croix very effective as they sang duets in studied poses, Château Margaux and unfettered talk were more attractive to us, ungallant though it might be. When we returned to the drawing-rooms, De Vigne took up his station beside the Trefusis again, and, throwing his arm over the back of her chair, bent down till his whiskers almost touched

the crimson wreath upon her hair, paying her strikingly marked attention, while Flora L'Estrange sang charming little French chansons, and the St. Croix tortured us with bravuras, and that cruel Countess of Turquoise flirted with the county member. What an intolerably empty-headed coxcomb, he seemed to me, I remember!

"What a fine creature that Trefusis is!" said De Vigne, as he drove us back to Cambridge in a dog-cart. "On my life, she is a magnificent woman! Arthur, she reminds me of somebody or other—I can't tell whom—somebody, I dare say, I saw in Spain or in Italy, or in India, perhaps."

"Shall I tell you," said Curly.

"Yes, pray do; but you've never been about with me, old boy, how should you know?"

"I was with you at the Chancery, and I haven't forgotten Lucy Davis."

"Lucy Davis!" exclaimed De Vigne, the light of old days breaking in upon him, half faded, half familiar. "By Jove! she is something like that girl. I declare I had forgotten that schoolboy episode, Curly. So she is like her—if Lucy had been a lady instead of a dressmaker. The deuce! I hadn't bad taste then, boy as I was. How many things of that kind one has and forgets!"

"Lucy didn't look like a woman who'd allow herself to be forgotten. She'd make you remember her by fair means or foul," said Curly.

"What! do you recollect her so well, young one?" laughed De Vigne. "She seems to have made more impression upon you than, I must say, she has done on me. There was the very devil in that girl, poor thing, young as she was. She was bold, bad, hardened to the core, I am afraid. Child as she was, she could entice to perfection, but of loving she had no more notion than a stone,

and yet she was at an age when girls *do* love, or rather fancy they do, if ever they will in their lives. Faugh! the broken hearts and the betrayed affections poets and parsons weep over, and women and newspapers lay upon our backs, where do we find them? Do you suppose the first step to Lais's sins or Messalina's depravities was Love? I vow it is too bad to stick on to the grande passion all the blame of vain, coarse, avaricious, finery-loving women's errors, nine-tenths of whom never *could* have loved anything but gold, or dress, or their own faces. Pshaw! the sentiment that goes about in our day would sicken a cat, if brutes were not too wise to lend their ears to all the bosh of humankind. But about this Trefusis, Curly. She does bring that girl to my mind, certainly, and there is in her something there was in Lucy Davis—a something intangible which repels, while her exterior beauty allures. Perhaps it is in both alike—a cold heart within."

"If we were only allured where there are warm hearts, we should keep in a blessed state of indifference," said I, thinking savagely of Lady Turquoise and that *confounded* county member.

"Hallo, Arthur! what has turned you cynic?" laughed De Vigne. "Only this very morning were you sentimentalizing over the 'Lady of Shalott,' and wanting to inflict it on me."

"Yes, and you stopped me with the abominable quotation, 'Ass! am I onion-eyed?'"

"Well, that showed two things in my favor: first, that I'd read Shakspeare—thank God for him!—and, second, that I haven't atrocious taste enough to call your sentimental mannerists of the present day by the highest title I can give Ben Jonson's 'Dear Willie'—Poet. Confound it, how dark it is! Is that a milestone, or a ghost? Whatever it is, the mare doesn't admire it. Gently, old girl!—quiet! quiet!"

"I say, De Vigne," said Curly, when the mare had come down on her forelegs again, and consented to trot onward, "I wish you'd tell us how that affair with Lucy Davis ended! Chevasney and I saw you quarreling the day before you left."

"I never quarreled," said De Vigne, contemptuously. "I never do with anybody; if they don't say what I like, I tell them my mind at once, and there's an end of it; but quarreling's a nasty, petty, jangling, lowering sort of thing. I never quarrel! Let me see, what did happen that day? I remember: I met Lucy that evening as I was going into Frestonhills, and when I told her I was about to leave, she demanded—what do you think?—nothing less than a promise of marriage! Only fancy—from me to her! She even said I had made her one. I couldn't have done, you know. I've been guilty of many mad things, but never of one quite so insane as that. I told her flatly it was a lie—so it was, and it put me in a passion to be saddled with such an atrocious falsehood. I never can stand quietly and see people trying to chisel me, you know. I told her it was a falsehood, and she could not go on asserting it; so, like most people when they are in the wrong, but won't admit it, she went off into one of those virago storms of hers, of which I had already experienced enough to sicken me. I offered to do anything she liked for her; to provide for her in any way she chose; and so I would, for I was quite a boy, and really pitied her from my soul for being unprovided for and unprotected at so early an age. But not a word would she hear from me; she was mad, I suppose, because she could not startle or chicane me into admitting the promise of marriage, having possibly in her eye the heavy damages an enlightened court would grant to her 'innocent years' and her 'wrongs!' At any rate, she would not hear a word I said, but she poured her in-

rectives into my ear, letting out that she had never loved me, but had intended to make me a stepping-stone to the money and rank she was always pining after; that, having failed, she hated me—she spoke the truth there, I believe—and that before she died she would be revenged on me. Heaven knows what she did *not* say; I can't recollect half; but being very young then, and not used to violent-tempered women, and having had besides a boy's hot, blind, and generous attachment to her for the time, when she left me with something very like curses, I remember I stood there with a curious chill over me, half of belief in her threats of vengeance, half of the disappointment that, when one grows older, one gets used to, as a matter of course, but, when one is new to life, gives one sharp twinges—in being betrayed, and finding our fancied angels turn out devils, and very spiteful, false-hearted devils too. So Lucy Davis and I parted, and that is the last I heard of or from her. Though she did hate me so, she liked my shawls, and my jewelry, and little things I had given her, well enough to keep them; or rather, no doubt they were all she had liked me for, I should say. I wonder what has become of her? It's easy enough to conjecture, poor creature!"

"Ah, I wonder!" responded Curly. "By George! what an amusing idea to think of her revenging herself upon you. She'd be puzzled to do it, I fancy."

"Rather," laughed De Vigne, reining up his mare; "but women say anything in a passion. Lucy Davis had gone straight out of my mind till you said that handsome Tre-fusis made you think of her. I am glad the St. Croix and L'Estranges are coming to lunch with you, Curly; I want to see more of my imperial Constance, and must be back at Vigne by Saturday. Sabretasche, and Pigott, and Severn, and no end of men are coming down for the pheasants. I wish you were there too, old fellows. Good night!

Au revoir!" And De Vigne set us down before old Trinity, and drove on to the Bull, where he was staying, smoking, and thinking, very likely, of Constance Trefusis.

Oh, those jolly Cambridge days! The Inchley Grind that I won by a neck, distancing Biddulph, of Christ's, who made so *very* sure of himself and his horse; the splendid manner in which we bumped Corpus and Katherine Hall, and carried off the Challenge Cup, to the envy of all the University; the row and scuffle of Town and Gown rows, dear to the inborn British passion for hard hits, where Curly knocked a cobbler down and then gave him in charge for assault; the skill with which that mischievous young Honorable caught his whip round the shovel-hat of a dean, raising that venerated article of dress in mid-air, only escaping rustication by dashing on with his tandem-team too quickly for identification,—were they not all written in their day among the records of Trinity men's larks?

We used to vow we were confoundedly tired of Granta, and so I dare say we might feel at the time, but how pleasant they were, those light-hearted college days!—the honors of the Eight-oar; the thrashing of the Marylebone Eleven; the rattle cross country for the Cesarewitch or the Cambridge Sweepstakes; the flirtations of pretty shop-girls in Petty Cury or Trumpington Street; the raving politics of the Union, occasional prelude to triumphs forensic and senatorial; the noisy epicureanism of wines, where scanty humor woke more merriment than wittiest mots twenty years after, and Cambridge port passed with a flavor that no olives or anchovies can give to comet claret now. How pleasant they were those jolly college days! As I think of them, how many kindly faces and joyous voices rise before me! Where are they now? Some lying with the colors on their breast beside the Euxine Sea and along the line of the Pacific; some struck down by the assassin's

knife in the temples at Cawnpore; some sleeping in eternal sleep beneath the sighing of the Delhi palms, or the sad rhythm of the Atlantic waves; some wasting classic eloquence on country hinds in moss-grown village churches; some fighting the great fight between science and death in the crowded hospital wards of London; some wearing honor, and honesty, and truth from their hearts in the breathless up-hill press of the great world;—all of them, living or dead, scattered far away about the earth, since the days when in our unspent strength and our undamped spirits, and our wild, wayward, careless youth, we lived in the shadow of the gray academic walls!

The time to lionize Cambridge, as everybody knows, is May and June, when the backs are in all their sylvan glory, when the graceful spires of King's rise up against the fair blue skies, only shadowed by fleecy clouds, the white towers of John's stand bosomed in green leafy shades, the Trinity limes fill the air with fragrance, the sun peers through the great shadowy elm-boughs of Neville's Court, and the brown Cam flows under its graceful bridges, with water-lilies and forget-me-nots on its breast, gliding with subdued murmur, as though conscious that it was in classic shades, through vistas of waving boughs, past gray, stately college walls, bringing into the grave haunts of learning the glad and vernal freshness of the spring. May is the time for Cambridge; still, even in October, we managed to give the L'Estranges and the St. Croix a very good reception. Women are sure to be royally *fêtées* by Cantabs, and our guests were calculated to excite the envy of all the University. Flora L'Estrange was pretty enough to bewitch Newton from his pedestal; Lady Blanche (whose dower house was but a mile or two from Euston Hollows) came with them, and to get a sight of the widow all Granta would have turned out any day. The two St. Croix were

dashing women, and I have told you before all that Constance Trefusis was in form and feature. We did the lions with very little architectural appreciation, but the science of eyes and smiles is a pleasanter one any day than the science of styles and orders; and we were quite as contented, and I have no doubt much better amused, than if, Ruskin à la main, we had been competent to pull to pieces the beauty of King's, and prate of "severity" and "purity." Happy in our barbarianism, we crossed the Bridge of Sighs with a laugh at old Fantyre's jokes, strolled down the Fellowship Walk, telling Julia St. Croix, who had not two ideas in her head, that Bacon's Gate would to a surety fall down on her; went in at Humility, through Virtue, and out at Honor, flirting desperately under those grave archways, and hurried irreverently through the libraries, where reading men, cramming in niches, looked up, forgetting their studies at the rustle of Lady Blanche's silk flounces, and Thorwaldsen's Byron seemed to glance with Juanesque admiration at the superb eyes of the Trefusis as she lifted them to that statue, which does indeed, as the poet himself averred, make a shocking nigger of him.

"How strange it seems to me," said De Vigne, as, entering King's Chapel, we brushed against one of the senior Fellows, who had dozed away in college chambers all the beauty and prime of his life—"how incomprehensible, that men can pass a whole existence in the sort of chrysalis state of which one sees so much in university walls. That fellow is a King's man; he obtained his fellowship by right, his degree without distinction. He lives on, fuddling his small brains—for small they must be, as he has never worked them since he got his Eton captaincy—with port, and playing solemn rubbers, and eating heavy dinners, till a living falls as fat as his avarice can desire. He has no

thoughts, no ambition, no home, no sphere beyond the academic pale, and no sympathy with the heart-throbs of warmer, stronger human nature."

"And no love, I dare say, save audit, and no mistress save turtle-soup," laughed Flora L'Estrange.

"Perhaps he had once, one whom her own will, or his own egotism, gendered by the selfish creed taught by the celibate obligation of the fellowship system, parted from him long ago," said Curly, with a tender glance at that very practical-minded flirt, Julia St. Croix.

"That's right, Curly," said De Vigne, amusedly, "make a romance of it. Fellows of colleges, with snuff and whist, and dry routine, are such appropriate subjects for sentiment! But after all, Miss Trefusis, that man is not a greater marvel to me than one of those classical scholars who is nothing *but* a classical scholar, such as one meets here and in Oxford, binding down his ambitions to the elucidation of a dead tongue, exhausting his energies in the evolving of decayed philosophies, spending, as Pelham says, 'one long school-day of lexicons and grammars,' his memory the charnel-house for the bones of a lifeless language, his brain enacting the mechanical rôle of a dictionary or an encyclopedia, living all his life without human aspirations or human sympathies, and in his death leaving no void among men, not missed even by a dog."

"It would not suit you?" asked the Trefusis, smiling.

"No, no," chuckled the old Fantyre to herself, "he'll have his pleasure, I take it, cost him what it may."

"I!" echoed De Vigne, "chained down to the limits of a commentator's studies or a Hellenist's labors! Heaven forbid! I love excitement, action, change; a mill-wheel monotony would be the death of me. I would rather have storms to encounter, than no movement to keep me alive."

"Are you so changeable, then?"

"Well, yes, I fancy I am. At least, I never met anything that could chain me long as yet."

He laughed as he spoke, leaning against one of the stalls, the sun streaming through the rich stained glass full upon his face, with its delicate aristocratic features, and his dark lustrous eyes gleaming with amusement at a thousand reminiscences evoked by her speech. The Trefusis looked at him with a curious smile, perhaps of will to chain the restless and wayward spirit, perhaps of pique at his careless words, perhaps of longing to conquer and to win him; it might have been hate, but—it certainly was not love. Still, Flora L'Estrange, who was a clever little thing, whispered to her husband,—

"Miss Trefusis will win Captain De Vigne if she can."

L'Estrange laughed, and looked at Granville and his companion, as they were, in appearance, discussing the subjects of the storied windows of Holy Henry's chapel, but talking, I fancy, of other topics than sacred art or history.

"Quite right, my pet, but I hope she *won't*. I would as soon see him marry a tigress."

Tired of lionizing, we soon returned to Curly's rooms, where you are sure the most *recherché* luncheon that could be had out of Cambridge shops and Trinity buttery, with London wine, and game from his governor's preserves, was ready for us. Curly never did anything without doing it well, and his rooms were, I think, the most luxuriously got up in all Granta, with his grand piano, his bronzes, and his landscapes, mixed up so queerly with tobacco-pots, boxing-gloves, pipes, and portraits of ballet-pets and heroes of the Turf, yet an essentially charming and comfortable and inviting tout ensemble, much more so than if it had had the dusters of a score of housemaids, or the keen eyes of a hundred "managing women" to put it "to rights." The luncheon was as merry as it was elaborate in comestibles—

what college meal, with wild dashing Cantabs, and fast, pretty women at the board, ever was not?—and while the Badminton and champagne-cup went round, and the gyps waited as solemnly and dreadfully as gyps ever do on like occasions, a cross-fire of wit and fun and nonsense shot across the table and mingled with the perfume of Curly's hot-house bouquets enough to bring the stones of time-honored Trinity about our irreverent heads. De Vigne, in very high spirits that day, laughed and talked with all the brilliance for which society had distinguished him; Flora and Lady Blanche were always full of mischievous repartee; Curly and Julia St. Croix flirted so desperately, that if it had not been for the publicity of the scene, I believe the boy would have gone straight away into a proposal. Lady Fantyre, especially, when the claret cup had gone round freely, was so utterly amusing that we forgot she was old, and the Trefusis, if she did not contribute equally to the conversation, sat beside De Vigne, darting glances at him from her large black eyes, and looking handsome enough to be inspiration to anybody.

"So you leave to-morrow?" she said, as they were waiting for the St. Croix carriage to take them home again.

"Yes. If *you* were going to remain I should stay too; but Mrs. St. Croix tells me you leave on Monday," said De Vigne, in a low tone, with an admiring glance, to which few women would have been insensible.

She looked at him with that cold, malicious smile, which, had I been he, would have made me very careful of that woman.

"It is easy to say that when, as I *am* going on Monday, I cannot put you to the test."

De Vigne's eyes flashed; he threw back his head coldly and haughtily.

"I never trouble myself to say what I do not mean, Miss Trefusis."

She smiled again; she had found she had power to pique him.

"Then will you come and see me in town after Christmas?"

What he answered I know not, but I dare say it was in the affirmative; he would hardly have refused anything to such a glance as she gave him. He lingered beside their carriage, and looked with ardent admiration at her as he pressed her lavender-gloved hand in farewell, and stood in the Trinity gateway with a smile on his lips, watching her roll away, twisting in his fingers a white azalea she had given him; but, two hours after, the flower was thrown into the college grate, and the bedmaker swept it out with the cinders. So he was not very far gone as yet.

II.

THE MAJOR OF THE DASHERS.

THE next morning, after we had "done chapel," De Vigne, who had sent on his groom, hunters, and luggage the day before, walked down to the station, and we with him.

"I wish you two fellows were coming down to Vigne with me," he said, as we went along. "You don't know what a bore it is having a place like that! so much is expected of one. You belong to the county, and the county makes you feel the relationship pretty keenly, too. You must fill the house at Easter, September, and Christmas. You must hear horrible long speeches from your tenantry,

wishing you all sorts of health and happiness, while you're wishing them at the devil for bothering you so. You must have confounded long interviews with your steward, who looks frightfully glum at the pot of money that has been dropped over the Goodwood, and hints at the advisability of cutting down the very clump of oaks that makes the beauty of the drawing-room view. Then, worst of all, you're expected to hunt your own county, even though it be as unfit as the Wash or the Black Forest, while you're burning to be with the Burton or Tedworth, following Tom Smith, or Tom Edge, or Pytchley men, who don't funk at every bullfinch."

"Do you hunt the Vigne pack, then, always?" asked Curly.

"I? No. I never said I *did* all those things. I only said they are expected of me, and it's tiresome to say no."

"As we experience when women make love to us."

"I never can say 'no' there," laughed De Vigne. "I am so amiable, I always oblige them. Do you know, I sometimes have a fancy to try and turn the part about Vigne into a hunting country, as Assheton Smith turned Hampshire. I should have no end of opposition—men who'd vow, as his governor did to him, that if I rode over their lands they'd have me up for trespass; but that would be rather fun. It's pleasant to do things one's told not to do."

"I wonder, then," said I, "you care to make love to The Trefusis, for her eyes say, 'Do do it,' as clearly as eyes can speak."

He laughed. "Yes. I must admit she doesn't look a very impregnable citadel."

"Not if you make it worth her while to surrender."

"None of them surrender for nothing," said De Vigne,

smiling. "Chacune a son prix—with some it's cashmeres, with others yellow-boys, with some it's position, with others a wedding-ring. I can't see much difference myself, though I'd give cashmeres in plenty, and should be remarkably sorry to be chiseled into settlements."

"I should fancy so," said Curly; "only think of the annihilation of larks, liberty, fun, claret, latch-keys, oyster suppers, guinguettes, and Cafés Régence, expressed in those two doomed words, a 'married man!' The forçat's mark isn't more distinctive and more terrible. To my mind, marrying's as bad as hanging, and equally puts a finish to all life, properly so called, or worth supporting."

"Did you tell Julia your views, Curly?" asked De Vigne, quietly.

"Pooh! stuff! What's Julia to do with me? the girl at the Cherryhinton public is a vast lot better-looking," muttered Curly, with an embarrassment that made me doubt if the limes of Trinity had not heard different opinions enunciated with regard to the holy bond.—N. B. Julia St. Croix that day three months tied herself to that same snuffy, portly, wine-embalmed Fellow she had laughed at with us in King's Chapel. To be sure he had then become rector of Snooze-cum-Rest; and when Ruth goes to woo Boaz, we may always be pretty certain she knows he is master of the harvest, and has the golden wheat-ears in her eye, sweet innocent little dear though she looks.

"The Cherryhinton public! I see—that's why skittles and beer have become suddenly delightful," laughed De Vigne.

"Why not?" asked Curly, meekly. "Skittles are no sin, and malt and hops are man's natural aliment; and as for barmaids! why, if one's denied houris and nectar, one must take to Jane and bitter beer, n'est-ce pas?"

"Don't know," said De Vigne. "I prefer le Quartier

Bréda and champagne. As Balzac says, 'Une femme belle comme Galatée ou Hélène ne pourrait me plaire tant soit peu qu'elle soit crottée.'

"You forgot that once—you didn't repudiate Lucy Davis?"

"Lucy was half a lady, in dress at least," laughed De Vigne, "and she got up uncommonly well, too; however, that was in my schoolboyish days, and one doesn't count them. After vulguses and problems a kitchenmaid is pardonable; and as for the young woman who presides over the post-office, or the oyster patties, she is perfectly irresistible. The *laissez aller* of the Paphian Temple is so delightful after the stiff stoicism of the Porch!"

"Well, thank Heaven, the Paphian Temple is built everywhere," said Curly, "and you find it under the taps of A. K., X. K., and XXX., as well as in the gilt walls of a Mayfair boudoir; else the poor devils who haven't the Mayfair key would get locked into very outer darkness indeed. Here's the train just starting. By Jove, that's lucky! All right, old fellow. Here's Puck; tumble in, old boy."

Tumbling in the old boy, (a wiry, hideous terrier, whom it was considered really beautiful to see cheying about in a barnful of rats,) De Vigne seated himself, and was rolled off en route to Vigne with a pretty brunette opposite him, who seemed imbued with extreme admiration of Puck, or—his master. Girls always begin by calling his children "little loves" to a widower, though the brats be as ugly as sin, and by admiring his dog to a bachelor, though afraid of their lives it should snap at them.

Curly and I walked back to Granta, and went to console ourselves, first with billiards and beer at Brown's, then with some hard practice on the river. I was in training with the Trinity Eight, and at that period confined all my hopes

to winning pewter, and all my aspirations to bumping John's and Corpus. Talk of the doctrine of renunciation! Preach it to a fellow who's been going in for raw steaks, few wines, no delicacies, and as small an amount of Buttery beer and Cambridge wine as possible, (no great loss that last item, *entre nous*,) and ask *him* if he'd find it either "sweet" or "easy" to choose being bumped, instead of bumping! Pooh! you might as well tell him to pray I might cut a crab out of sheer kindness to Christ's or Katherine Hall!"

Never do I get on boating, or look at the old pewter I won when we covered John's with mortification unspeakable in the run for the Ely Long Challenge Cup, but what Cambridge comes back to me in the full swing of all its jolly days, and I feel my back bend, my muscle swell, and my heart pump like a hammer of twenty-horse power, as I used to pull up the Cam in my outrigger or the eight-oar. I belong to the Blue Jersey B. C., the first in England; but somehow I don't feel the zest now that I used to feel cutting through the water with strong six-foot Monckton as stroke, (poor fellow! he went down with jungle fever, and is lying in the banyan shadow, in Ceylon sand,) and that merry, wicked little dog, Phil Hervey, for coxswain; he's a bishop now, and hush-hushes you, and strokes his apron, if you whisper the smallest crumb of fun over his capital comet wine. Dear old Cambridge! I wouldn't give a straw for a Cambridge man who didn't grow prolix as he talked of her, and didn't empty a bumper of Guinness's or Moët—as his taste may lie—in her honor. You may try to run up King's College, Glasgow, St. Bees, and all those places, sir, if you choose. They cram well there, possibly—I don't gainsay it—but where is the gentleman-like ring, the hearty good-fellowship, the polishing for your rough diamond, the leveling for your conceited cox-

comb, the perfecting in all muscular and athletic power, to be found in the twin universities? A man may read, or he may not read, at college. I prefer the boy who knows how to feather his scull, to him who only knows Latin quantities and Greek unities; at any rate, he will find his level, measure his weight, and learn—unless he be obtuse indeed—that through college life, as through all other life, the best watchwords are—Pluck and Honor.

I learnt that much at least, and it is no mean lesson, though I must admit that, after having had my cross taken away, been gated times innumerable, having done all the books of Virgil by way of penance, (paying little Crip, my wine-merchant's son, to write them out for me,) and been shown up before the proctor on no less than six separate occasions, I got rusticated in my fourth term, and finally took my name off the books. The governor laughed, preferred my Grind Cups, and my share in winning the Challenge Cup, to any Bell's or Craven's scholarships, and paid my debts without a murmur. Too good to be true, you will say, *ami lecteur*? No; there *are* fathers who can remember they have been young, though they are unspeakably rare—as rare as ladies who can let you forget it!

Now came the question, what should I do? “Nothing,” the correct thing, according to the governor. “Stand for the county,” my mother suggested. “Go as attaché to my cousin, the envoy to St. Petersburg,” my relatives opined, who had triumphed, with much unholy glory, over my rustication, as is the custom of relatives from time immemorial. As it chanced, I had no fancy for either utter dolce, the bray of St. Stephen's or the snows of Russia, so I put down my name for a commission. We had plenty of interest to push it, and the *Gazette* soon announced, “—th P. O. Lancers, Arthur Vane Tierney Chevasney, to be Cornet, *vice* James Yelverton, promoted;” and the —th,

always known in the service as the Dashers, was De Vigne's troop, my old Prestonhills hero !

The Dashers were then quartered at Kensington and Hounslow, and the first thing I saw as I drove through Knightsbridge was De Vigne's groom, Harris, riding a powerful thorough-bred, swathed in body-clothing, whom I recognized as Berwick, famous in the Euston Hollows run. You may be very sure that as soon as my interviews with the Adjutant and the Colonel were over, I found out De Vigne's rooms as speedily as possible. He had the drawing-room floor of a house in Kensington Gore, large, lofty rooms, with folding-doors, well-furnished, and further embellished with crowds of things of his own, from Persian carpets bought in his travels, to the last new rifle sent home only the day before. I made my way up unannounced, and stood a minute or two in the open doorway. They were pleasant rooms, just as a man likes to have them, with all the things he wants about him ready to his hand ; no madame to make him miserable by putting his pipes away out of sight, and no housekeeper to drive him distracted by sorting his papers, and introducing order among his pet lumber. A setter, a retriever, and a couple of Skyes, with Puck bolt upright in the midst of them, were on the hearth-rug, (veritable tiger-skin ;) breakfast, in dainty Sevres and silver, stood on one table, sending up a delicious aroma of coffee, omelettes, and devils ; the morning papers lay on the floor, a smoking-cap was hung, unchivalrously, on a Parian Venus ; a parrot, who apparently considered himself master of the place, was perched irreverently on a bronze Milton, and pipes, whips, pistols, and cards were thrown down on a velvet couch that Louise de Kéroualle or Clara d'Ische might have graced. From the inner room there came the rapid clash of small swords, while "Tonche, touche, touche ! riposte ! hola !" was

shouted, in a silvery voice, from a man who, lying back in a rocking-chair in the bay-window of the front room, was looking on at a bout with the foils that was taking place beyond the folding-doors. The two men who were fencing were De Vigne and a smaller, slighter fellow, the one calm, cool, steady, and never at a disadvantage, the other, skillful indeed, but too hot, eager, and rapid. In fencing, whether with the foils or the tongue, the grand secret is to be cool, for in proportion to your tranquillity grows your opponent's exasperation. The man in the bay-window was too deeply interested to observe me, so I waited patiently till De Vigne had sent the other man's foil flying from his hand, and then I went forward to claim his attention. He turned, with one of his sweet, rare, sunny smiles : "Ah ! dear old fellow, how are you ? Charmed to see you. This is the best move you ever made, Arthur. Mr. Chevasney, Colonel Sabretasche, M. de Cheffontaine, a trio of my best friends. We only want Curly to make the *partie carrée* perfect. Sit down, old boy ; we have just breakfasted, I am sorry to say, but here are the things, and all the sardines, and you shall soon have some hot chocolate and *côtelettes*."

While he talked he forced me into an arm-chair, and disregarding all my protests that I had already breakfasted twice—once at Longholme and once at a station—rang for his man. De Cheffontaine flung himself on a sofa, and began with a *mot* on his own defeat ; the man in the bay-window got lazily out of his rocking-chair and strolled over to us ; De Vigne took his *meerschaum*, and we were soon talking away as hard as we could go of the *belles* of that season, the *pets* of the ballet, Richmond, the Spring Meetings, the best sales in the yard, the last matches at Lord's, the chances of *Heliotrope's* being scratched for the

Goodwood, the certainty that Vane Stevens's roan filly would lose the trotting-match, with other like topics, to us, at least, of absorbing interest and importance. Sabretasche was, I found, a Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel and Major of the Dashers, and a most agreeable man he seemed, lying back in his chair, making us laugh heartily at witticisms which he spoke, quietly and indolently, in a soft, low, mellow voice. Had I been a woman, that beautiful face would have done for me irretrievably, as, according to report, it had done for a good many. Beautiful it was, even to my eye; and men value the size of another's muscle and the strength of his sinew more than they do the form of his face. But beautiful it was, with its pallid, aristocratic features, large, dark, mournful eyes, silky moustache, and wavy hair. Reckless devil-may-care, the man looked the recklessness of one who heeds nothing in heaven or earth—a little hardened by the world and its rubs, rendered cynical, perhaps, by injustice and wrong—but in the eyes there lay a kindness, and in the mouth a sadness which betokened better things. He might have been thirty, five-and-thirty, forty. One could no more tell his age than his character, though, looking at him, one could fancy it true what the world said of him—that no man ever found so faithful a friend, and no woman a more faithless lover than Vivian Sabretasche.

"Chevasney, who do you think is one of the beautés régnautes up here?" asked De Vigne, pushing me some Cubas.

"How should I know? The Cherryhinton barmaid?"

"Don't be a fool."

"The Trefusis, then?"

"Of course. She is still living with that abominable old Irishwoman, Lady Fantyre. They're in Bruton Street—a pleasant house, only everybody wonders where the

peeress finds the money. They give uncommonly agreeable receptions. Don't they, Sabretasche?"

"Oh, very!" answered the Colonel, with an enigmatical smile, "especially to you, I've no doubt; and the only tax levied on one for the entertainment is to pay a few compliments to mademoiselle, and a few guinea points to my lady. I can't say all the guests are the best ton; there are too many ladies designated by the definite article, and too many gentlemen with cordons in their button-holes; but they know how to amuse one another, and the women, if not exclusive, are at least remarkably pretty. The Trefusis is more than pretty, especially smoking a cigarette! Shall you allow her cigars when you're married to her, De Vigne?" •

"Not *when* I am."

"There's an unjust fellow! How like a man that is!" cried Sabretasche. "What's charming in any other women becomes horrid in his wife. You remind me of Jessie Villars: when her husband smokes, she vows the scent will kill her; when Wyndham meets her on the terrace, taking his good-night pipe, she lisps there's nothing so delightful as the scent of Cavendish. Come, Mr. Chevasney, I don't mind prying into my friends' affairs before their faces. Have not De Vigne and the Trefusis had some nice little flirtation before now?"

"To be sure," I answered. "It began to be rather a desperate affair; the Trinity backs could tell you many a tale, I dare say. He came down for Diana, and forsook her for Venus."

"But you can't say, old fellow, I ever deserted the quiver for the ceinture," cried De Vigne. "The Viewaway was never eclipsed by the Trefusis!"

"I don't know that. Have you taken up the affair where you left it?"

"I never reveal secrets that ladies share," said De Vigne, with a comically demure air, "but I'll be very generous, Arthur. I'll take you to call on her."

"Bien obligé. What do you think of this beauty, M. de Cheffontaine?" I asked of the lively little Baron.

"Oh!" laughed he, "je trouve toutes vos Anglaises superbes, magnifiques—quand elles ne sont pas prudes."

"Et cela est un défaut que vous ne pouvez pardonner, hé, mon cher?" asked Sabretasche, with his low silvery laugh.

"Ni vous non plus; mais la pruderie est une faute dont on ne peut jamais accuser la Trefusis."

Sabretasche laughed again, and quoted

"Non, jamais tourterelle •
N'aima plus tendrement.
Comme elle était fidèle
A—son dernier amant!"

De Vigne did not appear best pleased; he lifted his head to look out of the window into the park, and as he looked his annoyance seemed to increase. I followed his glance, and saw the Trefusis on a very showy bay, of not first-rate action, taking her morning canter.

"Ah, talk of an angel, you know!—there she is," said Sabretasche. "Wise woman to show often en amazone; it suits her better than anything. She has met little Jimmy Levison, and taken him on with her. Poor Jimmy! between her smiles and old Fantyre's honors he won't come off the better for those Bruton Street soirées. Why, De Vigne, you look quite wrathful. You wouldn't be jealous of little Jimmy, would you?"

I don't suppose De Vigne was jealous of little Jimmy, but I dare say he was not flattered to see the same wiles given to trap that very young pigeon that were bestowed to lure a fiery hawk like himself.

"It amuses me to see all those women taking their morning rides and walks," Sabretasche continued. "They love their darling horses so! and they do so delight in the morning air, and the green trees look so pleasant after the dusty pavé! and they never hint that they know the Knightsbridge men will be looking out for them, and that Charlie will be accidentally lounging by the rails, and Johnnie be found reading the *Morning Post* under the large avenue. The Trefusis will tell us that she cannot exist without her morning trot on 'dear Diamond,' but, sans doute, she remembered that De Vigne would be pretty sure to be breakfasting by this window, not to mention that she had whispered to little Jimmy her wish to see his new gray hack. I always look *under* women's words as I look under their veils; they mean them to embellish, but I don't choose they should hide at the same time."

"How do you act, Colonel," laughed De Vigne, "when you come to a Shetland veil tied down very tight?"

"I never yet met one that hadn't some holes," said Sabretasche. "No women are long a puzzle, they are too inconsistent, and betray their artifices by overdoing them. She is out of sight now, De Vigne. Would you like your horse ordered?"

De Vigne laughed.

"Thank you, no. Do you go to the new opera to-night, Sabretasche?"

"Yes. You know I never miss, though I should go with infinitely more pleasure if I could get the glories of Gluck and Mozart instead of the sing-song ballads of Verdi and Balfe."

"Music is the god of his idolatry," said De Vigne, turning to me. "It is positively one of his passions. Your heaven will be composed of sweet sounds, eh, Sabretasche?"

"As yours of houris and of thorough-breds."

"Perhaps. I should combine Mahomet's and the Indian's ideas into one—almond eyes and a good hunting-ground!" laughed Granville. "Look here, Arthur, at this Challenge. That man yonder did it. Isn't he a clever fellow—too good to lie still in a rocking-chair and talk about women?"

I looked at the Challenge, a little marble statuette from Landseer's picture, product of the Colonel's chisel. It was a wonderful little thing; every minutia, even each fine point of the delicate antlers, most beautifully and perfectly finished.

"How immensely jolly!" said I, involuntarily expressing my honest admiration—"how intensely delightful, to possess such a talent! What a resource it must be—what a refuge when other things pall!"

He smiled at my enthusiasm, and raised his eyebrows.

"Cui bono?" he said, softly, as he rose and pushed back his chair.

The man interested me, and when he and the Baron were gone I asked De Vigne what he knew of him, as we stood waiting for his tilbury, to go and call in Bruton Street.

"Of Vivian Sabretasche? I know much of him socially, little of himself; and of his history—if history he have—nothing. He is excessively kind to me, honorable and generous in all his dealings, a gentleman always. More of him I know not, nor, were we acquainted ten years, should I at the end, I dare say, know more."

"Why?"

"Why? For this reason, that nobody does. Hollingsworth and he were cornets together, yet Hollingsworth is as much a stranger to the real man as you or I. There are some men, you know, who don't wear their hearts on their sleeves; he is one, I am another. We are like snow-

balls; to begin with, it's a piece of snow, soft and pure and malleable, and easily enough melted; but the snowball gets kicked about and mixed up with other snow, and knocked against stones and angles, and hurried and shoved and pushed along till, in sheer self-defense, it hardens itself into a solid, impenetrable, immovable block of ice."

"Nonsense! You are not that yet."

"Not yet."

I should say he was not. The passionate blood of five-and-twenty was more likely to be at boiling point than at zero.

PART THE THIRD.

I.

HOW A SUBTLE POISON IS DRANK IN THE CHAMPAGNE AT AN OPERA SUPPER.

VERY good style was the Bruton Street house, and very good style (not *my* style, but that did not matter) was the Trefusis, sitting on a rose-hued couch, with the rose light of curtains of the same tint falling on her from the window, where she was surrounded by plants and birds in cages and on stands, with a young blonde-moustached boy out of the Guards, and a courtly white-haired old French exile lounging away their morning there. She was dressed in the extreme of fashion—almost too well, if ladies will admit such a thing to be possible—and she always reminded me of some first-rate actresses at the Français or the Bouffes playing the rôles of high-bred women, looking and speaking like ladies of the best society, and yet whom, do what one will, and be they as graceful as they may, one

cannot divest of a certain aroma, due rather, perhaps, to the proximity of the proscenium and foot-lights than to any fault of breeding in themselves; yet a something which we know we should not discover in the true marquises and baronnes of the Faubourg.

She looked up with a smile of conscious power, gave her hand tenderly to De Vigne with a full sweep of her superb eyes under their thick fringes, bent her head courteously to me, and put her Pomeranian dog on his knee. Old Lady Fantyre was there, playing propriety, if propriety could ever be persuaded to let herself be represented by that hook-nosed, disreputable, detestable, amusing old woman, who sat working away at the tapestry-frame with her gold spectacles on, occasionally lifting up her little keen brown eyes and mingling in the conversation, telling the old tales of "ma jeunesse," of the Bath and the Wells, of Ombre and Quadrille with Sheridan and Selwyn, of Talleyrand and Burke, "old Q." and Lady Coventry.

"I remember you at Cambridge, Mr. Chevasney, and our merry luncheon," said the Trefusis, as if Cambridge belonged to some dim era of her childhood, which it was astonishing she could recall at all.

"What! my dear," burst in Lady Fantyre, "you don't mean to say you remember all your acquaintances, do you? If so, ye'll have enough to do."

"Certainly not. But when they are as agreeable as Mr. Chevasney——"

"Of course—of course—ça va sans dire. Les présens ont toujours raison," continued the Viscountess, in her lively treble; "as true, by the way, that is, as its twin maxim, Les absens ont toujours tort. It would be hard, indeed, if we might not tell tales of our friends when they couldn't hear us. But I know *we* used to give cuts by the dozen. I remember walking down the Birdcage Walk with

Selwyn, (poor dear Selwyn, there isn't his like in this day; I remember him so well, though I was but a little chit then!) and a man, a very personable man, too—but, Lord! my dear, not one of us—came up, and reminded George he had known him in Bath. What do you think Selwyn did, my dear? Why, stared him in the face, of course, and said, 'Well, sir, in Bath I may possibly know you again.'

"That beats Brummel, when a lady apologized for keeping him so long standing by her carriage: 'My dear lady, there is no one to see it,'" said De Vigne, laughing.

"Abominable!" cried the Trefusis. "If I had been that woman I would have told him I had made sure of that, or I would not have hazarded my reputation by being seen with him."

"Brummel would have been very willing to have been seen with *you*," said De Vigne, fixing his eyes on her, and he knows pretty well how to make his eyes talk, I assure you.

"There's not one of you men now-a-days like Selwyn," began the old raconteuse again, while the Trefusis bent her stately head to her blond Guardsman, and De Vigne balanced his cane thoughtfully on the Pomeranian's nose. "You talk of your great wit Lord John Bonmot; why, he hasn't as much wit in his whole body as there was in poor dear George's little finger. Lord! how we laughed when Charles Fox asked him if he'd been to see the execution of a criminal, you know, called by the same name, Charles Fox, who was hanged. 'Not I,' said George. 'I make a point of never attending rehearsals.' Ah! there isn't one-half the wit, the verve, the talent among you new people there were in my young time. Where is the man among you that can make laughter run down the table as my friend Sheridan could? Which of you can move heads and hearts

like William Pitt? Where among those idle lads in the Temple, who smoke Cavendish and drink beer till they *think* nothing better than tobacco and beer, shall I see another Tom Erskine? Poor dear Tom! who was such a naughty boy till that girl took him in hand. Which among those brainless scribblers who print poems, and make one want a Tennyson's Dictionary only to understand the foolish adjectives in them, can write like that boy Byron, with his handsome face and his wry foot? Lord, what a fuss there was with him when he was first made a lion! And then to turn his coffin from the Abbey! Such comic verses as he made on my parrot, too, he and young Hobhouse!"

And old Fantyre, having fairly talked herself out of breath, at last halted, and De Vigne, annoyed first of all with little Jimmy in the morning, and secondly with the attention the Trefusis gave her blondin, neglected her for the Viscountess, with much parade.

"I fear you are right, madam," he said, laughing. "Ours is an age of general action rather than individual greatness. We have a good catalogue of ships, but no Ulysses, no Atrides, no Agamemnon——"

"I don't remember them: they wern't in our set," responded Lady Fantyre, naively.

"Or perhaps," continued De Vigne, stroking his moustache with laudable gravity, "it is rather that intellectual light is diffused so much more widely that the particular owners of it are not so much noticed. Arago may be as great a man as Galileo, but it is natural that a world that teaches the laws of gravitation in its twopenny schools scarcely regards him with the same wonder as if they disbelieved in their earth's movement, and were ready to burn him for his audacity."

"Ours is an age of science and of money," said the old exile. "It is an age of machinery, tubular bridges, rail-

roads, telegraphs, whose principal aim is to economize labor and time; an age in which everything is turned to full account, from dead algæ to living brains; and what will not yield some grain for its own good, or the good of the community, is thrown aside as chaff, and cannot complain, for it is a universal law."

"Yes," said De Vigne, "we are eminently practical; we extract the veratrin from crocuses, and value Brunel more than Bulwer. We throw our millions into a scheme for cutting through an isthmus, but we cannot spare our minutes to listen to the music of the spheres, though Pythagoras were resuscitated to teach us them. So best! many more of us find it of much greater importance to get quickly to India than to wait for all the learning of the schools; and Adam Smith, though infinitely more prosaic, is probably a much more useful philosopher than Bolingbroke."

"Captain De Vigne, why don't you stand for the county?" asked the Trefusis, playing with her breloques, and looking truly magnificent in her rose-velvet setting.

"Because I'm before my time," laughed De Vigne. "If I could have a select cabinet of esprits forts I should be delighted to join them, and help them to seminate liberty and tolerance; but really to settle Maynooth grants, to quarrel on rags or no rags, to settle whether we shall confine ourselves to 'corks squared for rounding' or admit rounded corks into the country, to hear one noble lord blackguard his noble friend opposite, and one hon. member split hairs with another hon. member—it would be beyond me, it would indeed. I would as soon go every night to an old ladies' tea-fight, where bonnets were rancorously discussed and characters mercilessly blackened over Sou-chong and muffins."

"Come!" said the Trefusis, "you find such fault with your generation you should set to work and regenerate it."

Hunting with the Viewaway, and lounging about drawing-rooms, will not do much toward improving your species."

"Why should I? As Sabretasche says, 'Cui bono?'" answered De Vigne, annoyed at her sarcastic and nonchalant tone.

"Then you have certainly no business to sit at home at ease and laugh at other men over your claret and Cubas. Why may not other geniuses have equal right to that easy put off of yours, 'Cui bono?'"

"They have not equal right if they have once assumed to be geniuses. Let a man assert himself to be something, be it a great man or a scoundrel, and the world expects him to prove his assertion. But an innocent officer, who likes his claret and Cubas, troubles nobody, and never sets up for a mute inglorious Milton, declining to sing only because his audience isn't good enough for him, has a right to be left to his claret and Cubas, and not to be worried because it happens he is not what he never pretended to be."

The Trefusis looked at him maliciously; there was the devil in that woman's eye.

"And are you content to be lost in the bouquet of the wine, and buried in the smoke of the tobacco? Are you satisfied with spending your noble existence in an allegorical chaise-longue, picking out the motes and never remembering the beam?"

The tone was provoking in the extreme; it put up De Vigne's blood, as the first touch of the snaffle does a young thorough-bred. He smiled, and stroked his long, silky moustaches.

"That depends upon circumstances. When I have had my full swing of deviltries, extravagances, dissipations, pleasures, Trefusises, and other charming flowers that beset the path of youth, I may, perhaps, turn to something."

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It was an abominably rude speech; and though De Vigne spoke in the soft, courteous tone he used to all women, whether peeress or peasant, eighty or eighteen, it had its full effect on the Trefusis. She flushed crimson, then turned pale, and I shouldn't have cared to provoke the malignant glance those superb eyes shot upon him. She took no notice, and, turning to the little Guardsman, thanked him for a bouquet he had sent to her, and pointed it out to him, set in a console near.

De Vigne drove the tilbury from the door supremely gloomy and silent.

"I say, Arthur," he said at last, "Victor Hugo says, somewhere, that we are women's playthings, and women are the devil's. I fancy Satan will get the worse of the bargain, don't you?"

"The deuce I do—that's to say, if the war's in words; though I must say you polished off the Trefusis neatly enough just now. Did you see the look she gave you?"

"Yes," said De Vigne, shortly. "However, anything's better than a milk-and-water woman. I should grow sick of a girl who always agreed with me. They look so pretty when their blood's up. Where shall we go now? Suppose we turn into the Yard, and take a look at those steel grays Sabretasche mentioned? I want a new pair to run tandem. And then we can take a turn or two round the Ring, and I'll show you the women worth cultivating, young one."

We followed out his programme, bargained for the grays at a hundred and fifty—and immensely cheap, too, for they were three-parts thorough-bred, with beautiful action—drove half a dozen times round the Ring, where fifty pair of bright eyes gleamed softly on De Vigne, from the Marchioness of Turquoises in her stately barouche, to little Coralie of Her Majesty's ballet in her single horse brougham;

and then went to mess, where I made acquaintance with the rest of the fellows in the Dashers—capital fellows they were, too, and enjoyed good salmi and first-rate champagne; the Dashers being as crack a troop as the Tenth, Eleventh, or the Blues, with a peculiar pattern for their plate, a chef for their cook, and a good claret connoisseur in their Colonel. The claret was a vast lot better than Cambridge port, the dinner was something rather superior to hall, and the mess was a good deal greater fun than Moncton's Joe Miller jokes, and Phil Hervey's Simon the Cellarer, at our very best wines. I liked *this* soupçon of vie militaire, at any rate, and, upon my word, I quite regretted leaving the table when Sabretasche invited me to go with him to his box at the Opera, for I didn't care two pins for music, but I did not dare to refuse the first favor from such an exclusive man, and, besides, I had seen little Coralie in the Ring, and consoled myself with the thought of the ballet. De Vigne was going too, for reasons best known to himself, and went to his stall, while I followed the Colonel to his box, in the middle of the second act.

Sabretasche spoke not at all while Grisi was on the stage, and I put my lorgnon up and took a glance round the house. I always think Her Majesty's, on a grand night, with all the boxes filled with the handsomest and best-dressed women in town, one of the prettiest sights going; and I did the grand tier deliberately, going from loge to loge, so that it was some little time before I got on the second tier; and in one of its center boxes, looking like a very exquisite gipsy queen, in a scarlet opera cloak, with scarlet and gold in her raven hair, and scarlet camelias against her white lace dress, sat the Trefusis, with little bright-eyed, hooked-nosed, bewigged, and black Mechlin'd old Fantyre as a foil.

Presently the Trefusis raised her bouquet to her lips

quite carelessly, to take its perfume, I presume. I happened to look down at De Vigne: his lorgnon was fixed on her too. He smiled, left his stall, and in a minute or two I saw him displacing the blond Guardsman, and bending down to the Trefusis.

"What do you think of that affair, Chevasney?" said the Colonel to me, as the curtain came down.

"I don't know enough how it stands to judge. Enlighten me, will you?"

Sabretasche shook his head.

"I know no more than yourself. De Vigne, like all wise men, is silent upon his own business, and I never attempt to pry into it. I see the thing on its surface, and it seems to me that the lady is serious, whatever he be."

"Serious? Oh, hang it! he can't be serious."

"Tant pis pour lui if he be," said the Colonel, smiling. "But, my dear boy, you do not know women as yet; how should you, in two-and-twenty years, read that enigmatical book, which is harder to guess at than Sanscrit or black letter? And you can never fathom the deep game that a clever one like the Trefusis, if I mistake her not, can play when she chooses."

I, the most knowing hand in Granta—I, who if I did pique myself on any one thing, piqued myself on my skill and knowledge in managing the beau sexe—I, to be told I did not know women! I pocketed the affront as best I might, for I felt a growing respect and liking for the Colonel, with his myriad talents, his brilliant reputation, and mysterious reserve, and told him I did not believe De Vigne cared an atom more for the Trefusis than for twenty others before her.

"I hope so," he answered; "but that chess they are playing yonder ends too often in checkmate. However, we will not prophesy so bad a fate for our friend, for worse he

could not have than to fall into those soft-gloved hands. By the way, though, her hands are not soft, they are not the hands of a lady."

"You have a bad opinion of the Trefusis, Colonel?"

"Not of the Trefusis in particular."

"Of her sex, then?"

"I have cause," he answered, briefly. "How full the house is, and how few of those people come for music. How few of them would care if it were dance music of D'Albert's, instead of Donizetti's symphonies, if the dance music chanced to be most in fashion. Make it the rage, and three-quarters of the music lovers here would run after a barrel-organ ground on that stage, as they are now doing after Mario. Half England, if the Court, the Peerage, and Belgravia voted the sun a bore, and a rushlight *comme il faut*, would instantly shut their shutters and burn rushlights while the fashion lasted. And then people care for the world's opinion!"

"Because they can't get on without it."

"True enough; they despise it, but they must bow to it before they can use it and turn it to their own ends—those must, at least, who live by sufferance on it and through it. Thank God, I want nothing from it, and can defy it at my leisure—or rather forget it and neglect it, defying is too much trouble. A man who *defies* is certain to raise a hue and cry to dog his heels, whose bray and clamor is as senseless as it is deafening, and no more able to declare what *bête noire* it has come out after than Dogberry. Ah, you are studying that fair girl in the fifth from the center. That is little Eulalie Papillon. Does she not look a pretty, innocent dove? Yet she will cost those three fellows with her more than a racing stud, and she is as avaricious as Harpagon. I should like to make a computation of how many of these people come for music. That old man there,

who droops his head and takes snuff during the entr'actes ; those fellows on the ground tier taking shorthand notes for the daily journals ; one or two dilettante ladies who really know something of fugues and symphonies, those are all, I verily believe. Little Eulalie comes to show herself, and carry Bevan off to her petit souper, for fear any fairer Lais should pounce on him ; those décolletées and diamondized old ladies come because it is one of the Yards where their young fillies tell best, and may chance to get a bid. Lady Ormolu there, that one with marabouts in her hair, comes because her lord is a George Dandin, and she has no chance of meeting Villiers, who is her present Cléante, anywhere else. Mrs. Lacquers, the owner of those very white teeth yonder—truly Howard's one of the greatest benefactors to the beau sexe going—is here because there was a rumor that her husband's bank would not stand, and he, who is a Bible society president and vessel of grace, but who still keeps one eye open on terrestrial affairs, has told her to exhibit here to-night, and be as lively as possible, with plenty of rubies about her, so that he may get off to Boulogne. Dear man ! he remembers 'Aide-toi et Dieu t'aidera.'

"Have you a private Belphégor in your pocket, sir ?" said I, dropping my lorgnon, "to help you unroof the houses and unlock your acquaintances' brains ?"

"My Belphégor is experience," laughed Sabretasche. "And now hush, if you please, Chevasney ; there is Grisi again, and as I come for music, though nobody else may, I like to be quiet."

It was curious to note the change that came over his melancholy, raffiné, and expressive countenance, as, leaning forward, he listened to the priestess, and I saw the gaze of many women fixed upon him, as, with his eyes half closed, and his thoughts far away, he leaned against the side of his

box. They said he was deucedly dangerous to women, and one could hardly wonder if he was. A gallant soldier in the field, a charming companion in a club or mess-room, accomplished in music, painting, sculpture, as in the hardier arts of rifle and rod, speaking eight continental languages with equal facility, his manners exquisitely tender and gentle, his voice soft as the Italian he best loved to speak, his face and form of unusual beauty, and to back him, all that subtler art that is only acquired in the eleusinia of the boudoir,—no marvel if women, his pet playthings, did go down before Vivian Sabretasche. He came of a family as poor as they were proud, and was born in Italy, where his father, having spent what money he had at the green tables, lived to retrench—retrenchment being always synonymous, in English minds, with the Continent, though whether a palace, even if a little tumble-down, ortolans, lachrymachristi, and nightly reunions, do tend to tighten purse-strings and benefit check-books, is an open question. Luckily for Sabretasche, his uncle, a rich old roué of the Alvanley and Pierrepont time, went off the stage without an heir, and he, at three-and-twenty, came in for all the property, a princely balance at Barclay's, a delicious town-house, and a moor up in Inverness-shire. On his accession, he left the Neapolitan Hussars, entered the Queen's, and took the position to which his old name and new wealth entitled him. It was always the popular idea that Sabretasche had some history or other, though *why* he should have nobody could probably have told you; but everybody loved him, from the charger that followed him like a dog, and ate out of his hand, to the young Cornets who, in their larks and their difficulties, always found a lenient judge and a kind friend in gay, wealthy, liberal, highly-gifted, and ultra-fashionable Vivian Sabretasche.

When he had drunk his fill of music, and I had clapped

little Coralie to my heart's content—an ovation that young lady little needed, having a claque of her own in omnibus-boxes, not to mention some twenty men who threw her rare bouquets with veritable bracelets and bravissime—Sabretasche and I passing through the crush-room, or rather the draughty, catarrh-conferring passages that answer to that portion of Her Majesty's now-a-days, came close to De Vigne with the Trefusis on his arm, bending his haughty head till his moustaches touched her gold and scarlet wreath, while the little blondin escorted Lady Fantyre, nowise enraptured, apparently, at the charge of that shrewd old dame, with her sandal-wood perfume and old lace of price and dirt untold. They could not get on; Lady Fantyre's carriage was not yet up, and we stood and chatted together, the Trefusis smiling very graciously on us, but reserving all her most telling glances for De Vigne, on whose arm she hung with a sort of proprietorship, for which I cursed her with most unchristian earnestness.

"Come home to supper with us," whispered the Trefusis, as their carriage was at last announced.

De Vigne accepted the invitation with a flash of his eyes, which showed one well enough the Trefusis was beginning to play the deuce with him; and old Fantyre extended it to Sabretasche and to me. The Colonel smiled, and bowed his acquiescence, and told his man to drive us to Bruton Street, as De Vigne sprang into the Fantyre brougham.

"I was engaged to what I like much better, lansquenet at Hollingsworth's; but I want to see how the game lies in Bruton Street. I fancy that woman's moves will be worth watching," said Sabretasche, throwing himself back on his cushions. "By the way, *who* is she—do you know?"

"The devil I don't! Somebody up at Cambridge said

she was old Fantyre's companion, others whispered her daughter, others her niece, others, what the old woman said herself, that she is the child of her brother—a John, or James, or something monosyllabic, Trefusis."

"No very exalté lineage that," returned Sabretasche; "for, if report be true—and I believe it is—the Fantyre at sixteen was an orange-girl, like the first Polly Peachem, crying, 'Who'll buy 'em, two a penny!' up Pall Mall; that Fantyre, the most eccentric of eccentric Irishmen, (and all Hibernians have a touch of madness,) beheld her from his window in Arthur's, fell in love with her foot and leg, walked out, offered to her on the pavé, was accepted of course, and married her at seventy-five. What fools there are in the world, Chevasney! She pushed her way cleverly enough, though as to knowing all the exclusives she talks about, she no more knew them than my dog did. She heard of them, of course; saw some of the later ones at Ranelagh and the Wells; very likely won francs at piquet from poor Brummel when he was in decadence at Caen, to put him in mind of the palmy days when he fleeced Coombe of ponies; possibly entertained Talleyrand, when the Bishop of Autun was glad of an English asylum; and, of course, would get Moore, and Jeffreys, and Tom Erskine, and all the young fellows; for a pretty woman, and a shrewd woman, can always make men forget she sprang from the gutter: but as to the others—pooh! she was no more intimate with them than I; old Fantyre himself was in far too mauvaise odeur, and when he died at ninety-six, left his widow to live by her wits at the Bads, rather than to figure as a leader of ton. Here we are: it will all be very comme il faut and irréprochable—I bet you, Chevasney, Lady Fantyre is afraid of my eye-glass!"

It was all comme il faut and irréprochable. De Vigne was sitting beside the Trefusis with his arm thrown over

the back of her chair, his glowing, passionate eyes fixed on hers with the vehement will and feeling that was characteristic of his fiery and concentrated nature; while in the Trefusis's face was merely the look of calm, conscious beauty, gratified at triumph and exigent of homage—a beauty the embodiment of tyranny—a beauty that would exult in denying the passion it excited—a beauty only a tool in the hands of its possessor, to pioneer a path for her ambitions and draw within her reach the prizes that she coveted.

De Vigne did not look best pleased to see us. I dare say he would have preferred a tête-à-tête supper, with old Lady Fantyre dozing after her champagne. Such, however, was denied to him; perhaps they knew how to manage him better than to make his game too easy. Do any of us care for the tame pheasants knocked over at our feet in a battue, as we do for an outlying deer that has led us many hours' weary toil through burn and bracken, over rock and furze? We knock down the pheasants to swell our triumph, and leave them where they fall, to be picked up after us; but the difficulty and excitement of the other warm our blood and fire our pride, and we think no toil or trouble too great to hear the ping of the bullet and see the quarry pulled down at last.

We had a very pleasant supper. Opera suppers are always pleasant to my mind; there is a *laissez aller* about them, and that always gives a certain *pointe à la sance*, which it would be better for ladies to put down among their items for a *soirée* a good deal oftener than they do.

There was plenty of champagne, and, under its genial influences, the Fantyre tongue was loosened, and Sabretasche amused himself with the old lady's shrewd wit and not over-particular stories—a queer contrast enough to the little snuffy, rouged, and wigged Irish Peeress, with his

delicate beauty of feature, and singular refinement of mind and of tone; while De Vigne fired, not by the wine, for he had too strong a head, and, moreover, I doubt if he took quite so much as our hostess, but by the Parthian glances that had been so freely bestowed on him, and the proximity of that superb Trefusis, his idol—at least for the present—talked with the spirit, and wit, and very soul of repartee, of which, when he chose, no man on earth could give out more brilliant coruscations. The Trefusis never said very much; hers was chiefly silent warfare.

“What did you think of the ballet, Colonel?” asked old Fantyre, peering up into his face. At seventy-six women are still much kinder to a handsome man than to a plain one.

“I thought very little of it,” answered Sabretasche. “Coralie has no grace; boys make a fuss with her because she happens to be pretty, but as for her dancing—fugh! scores of Castilian girls I have seen doing the fandango under the village chestnut-trees would beat her hollow.”

“Glorious dance that fandango is!” said De Vigne. “These magnificent Spanish women——(by the way, Miss Trefusis, a bet was laid at the United yesterday that you were a Spaniard; Cheffontaine swore you ought to be a Provençale; and Sabretasche here said if you went to Naples they would claim you as a compatriote; see what it is to make all nations quarrel for you!) I have danced the fandango: no more able to help myself when the girl and the castanets began, than the holy cardinals, who, when they came to Madrid to excommunicate the cachucha, ended by joining in it. Like the rest of us, I suppose, they found forbidding a thing to other people very easy and pleasant, but going without it themselves rather more difficult.”

“You never go without a thing you like, do you?” asked the Trefusis.

"Certainly not. Why should I?"

"I don't know; only boys who have reveled in Bath buns sometimes rue it when they realize chromate of lead."

"Oh! as for that," laughed De Vigne, "the moralists make out that a sort of chromate of lead follows, as natural sequence, any Bath buns one may fancy to eat. I don't see it myself. I've eaten a good many buns, but they have had veritable sugar on them, and I have not been the worse; and, even if I were, I question if the boy who lingers miserably at the pastrycook's window, without the twopence that would enable him to go in and satisfy his longings, does not suffer quite as much in one way as his richer schoolfellow, who staggers home suffering under a repletion of tuck!"

"Only the worst of it is, that under repletion of tuck one loses one's relish for it," said Sabretasche.

"Does one?" laughed De Vigne, emptying his wine-glass. "Ah, well, I am not at that stage just yet."

"Your best Bath buns are women, Captain De Vigne," said Lady Fantyre, with her silent chuckle, "and you'll be uncommonly lucky, my dear, if you don't find some chromate of lead, as you call it, after one or two of *them*."

"He will, indeed," smiled Sabretasche. "Ladies are the exact antipodes of olives: the one begins in salt, and leaves us blessed with a delicious rose aroma; the other, with all due deference, is nectar to commence with, but how soon, through our fault entirely, of course, they turn into very gall!"

Lady Fantyre chuckled again; she was a wise old woman, in her way, and enjoyed nothing more than a hit at her own sex. To be sure, she was leaving the field very fast, and, perhaps, grudged the new combatants her cast-off weapons.

"True enough, Colonel; yet, if one may believe naughty stories, the flavor's been one uncommonly to your taste."

Sabretasche shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear lady, according to De Vigne's theory, can one put aside the Falernian because there will be some amari aliquid at the bottom of the glass? Nobody loved the beau sexe better than Mahomet, yet he learned enough from his favorite almond eyes to create his heaven without women!"

"What a heathen you are, Sabretasche!" cried De Vigne. "If I were Miss Trefusis, I wouldn't speak to you!"

"My dear fellow, I could support it!" said Sabretasche, naïvely, with such delicious Brummelian impudence that I believe Lady Fantyre could have kissed him—a favor for which the Colonel would have been anything but grateful.

The Trefusis's eyes glared; De Vigne, sitting next her, did not catch their expression, or I think, though he might be getting mad about her, he would not have taken the trouble to look so tenderly at her, and whisper, "If he could bear it, *I* could not."

"Yes you could," said the Trefusis, through her pearly teeth. "You would make me the occasion for an epigram on female caprice, and go and pay the same compliments to Lady Turquoise or Coralie the danseuse. I never knew the man who could not support, with most philosophic indifference, the cruelty of one woman if he had another to turn to, provided she had not left him for some other man, when, perhaps, his pride might be a little piqued."

De Vigne smiled; he was pleased to see her annoyed.

"Well, we are philosophic in self-defense, probably; but you are mistaken in thinking so lightly of the wounds you give, and I am sorry you should be so, for you will be more likely to refuse to what you fancy a mere scratch the healing touch that you might, perhaps, be persuaded to

accord if you were more fully aware of the harm you had done."

De Vigne's eyes glowed darker, till he looked as if he really meant it, but Sabretasche interrupted him.

"Talking of wounds, De Vigne? My dear fellow, who gets them now? This vanilla cream is excellent, Lady Fantyre. Vanilla is a very favorite flavor of mine. The surest way of wounding, if such a thing be possible when the softest little ingénue wears a chain-armor of practical egotism, is to keep invulnerable yourself. Miss Trefusis teaches us that."

"Curse the fellow!" muttered De Vigne.

He liked Sabretasche cordially, but he could have kicked him at that moment with an intense degree of pleasure.

"You know the world, Colonel," smiled old Fantyre. "I like men who do: they amuse one. When one's been behind the scenes one's self, those poor silly fools who sit in front of the stage, and believe in Talma's strut and Siddons's tears, in the rouge and the paint, and the tinsel and the trap-doors, do tire one so. You talk of your ingénues; I'm sure they're the most stupid lot possible."

"Except when they're ingénues de Saint Lô," laughed De Vigne.

"Which most of them are," said the Fantyre. "Take my word for it, my dear, if you find a woman extra simple, sweet, and prudish, you will be no match for her. Sherry's a very pleasant, light, innocent sort of wine, but strychnine's sometimes given in it, you know, for all that; and if a girl cast her eyes down more timidly than usual, you may be pretty sure those eyes have looked on queerer scenes than you fancy."

"To be sure," said De Vigne. "I would a good deal sooner have to deal with an Athénais de Mortemar than

with a Française d'Aubigné. I should be on my guard against the wicked little Montespan, but I should be no match for Sainte Maintenon. 'C'est trop contre un mari' (or un amant) 'd'être coquette et dévote: une femme devrait opter.'"

"Then, when you marry, you will take your wife out of a guinguette rather than a convent?" asked the old lady, with a comical smile.

He smiled too, and stroked his moustaches. The Trefusis shot a keen, rapid, hard glance at him, as he said, "Come, come, Lady Fantyre, is there no medium?"

"Between prudes and Aspasias?" said her shrill little treble. "No, sir—not that I ever saw—and les extrêmes se touchent, you know."

"Hush! hush!" cried Sabretasche, "you will corrupt me, Lady Fantyre—positively you will—and you will make me think shockingly of all my kind, soft-voiced, soft-skinned friends."

"Somebody has made you think as badly of us as you can," said the sharp old woman. "Not I. What do you think of that Moselle, Captain de Vigne?"

He thought it good, but not so good as the Trefusis, who acted out the song, "Drink to me with thine eyes, love," in a manner eminently calculated to intoxicate him more than all the wine ever pressed from Rhenish vineyards. And when she took a little dainty cigarette between her ruby lips, and leant back on her favorite rose velvet couch, leaning her white arm upon it, so that its rounded lines might show, laughing at the Fantyre cancons, and flashing on De Vigne her brightest glances, even Sabretasche and I, who were set against her by that most dogged thing, a prejudice, could not deny that a finer woman had never worried a man's peace of mind out of him, or sent him headlong into follies which close ever his

head and shut out all chance of a fairer future or a wiser path.

"Come in and smoke a pipe, Arthur," said De Vigne, when we had at length left the Fantyre petit souper, and Sabretasche had gone to his lansquenet at Hollingsworth's. "'Tisn't worth while going anywhere else to-night; it's three now. I have some splendid Glenlivet, (how naturally one offers a Cantab something to drink! as naturally as to a cabman, I declare,) and I shall like a chat with you. Hallo! here's my number. Confound it! why do they build town-houses all alike, that one can't know one's own by a particular mark, as the mother in the novels always knows her stolen child. Symmetry? Oh! that's like Sabretasche. One wants symmetry in a racer, I allow it, but in one's lodging-house I could put up without it, rather than pull up Vivandière on her haunches twice for nothing. Where's my latch-key? Confound the obstinacy of inanimate objects; it beats the obstinacy of a theorist on modern ethics. Right on, up the stairs. I'll follow you. By George! who's that smoking in my rooms? It can't be Harris, because I gave him leave to go to Cremorne, and not come home till morning, in time to fill my bath. It is tobacco, Arthur. What a devilish impertinence!"

He pushed open the door. On De Vigne's pet sofa, with Puck on his knees, a French novel in his hand, and a meerschaum in his lips, lay lazy, Sybaritish, girlish-looking, light-hearted "Little Curly."

"Curly!" cried De Vigne. "By Jove, how delighted I am! Little Curly! Where, in Heaven's name, did you spring from, my boy?"

"I sprang from nowhere," responded Curly, taking his pipe out of his mouth. "I've given up gymnastics, they're too tiring. I drove down in a cab that privately informed me it had just taken six cases of scarlet fever and three of

smallpox to the hospitals, from Meurice's, whither I arrived two hours ago, and where I had some hock that was ambrosia, but a chambermaid with red hair, fit to turn it all sour; and after digesting and recovering both of which, I thought I'd come and look after you. I found you were out—of course I knew you would be—and with the philosophy that always characterizes my slightest movements, took Le Brun, found out a pipe, (how well you brown yours, by the way,) and made myself jolly."

"Quite right," responded De Vigne, who was a perfect Arab for hospitality. "Delighted to see you. We were mentioning you to-day, and wishing you were up here, weren't we, Arthur? We're quite a Frestonhills reunion. What a pity the Doctor is not here, and dear Arabella. But I say, Curly, have you got quit of Granta, like this disreputable fellow, or are you only run up on leave, or how is it?"

"Don't you remember my degree was given me this year because I am a peer's son?" asked Curly, reprov-ingly. "See what it is to be a Goth without a classical education. You *should* have gone to Granta, De Vigne, you'd have been stroke of the Cambridge Eight, not a doubt of it. There's muscle gone to waste! It's very jolly, you see, being an Honorable, though I never knew it; one gets credit for brains whether one has them or not. What an inestimable blessing to some of the pillars of the aristocracy, isn't it? I suppose the House of Lords was instituted on that principle, and its members are no more required to know why they pass their bills than we, their sons and heirs, are required to know why we pass our examinations."

"And what are you going to do with yourself now?" said De Vigne. "For the present you'll keep on that sofa, and make yourself whisky-toddy; but après?"

"Après? Well, the governor wanted me to go in for diplomacy, but I wasn't up to it—lies are not my genre, they're too much trouble; so I demonstrated to him that it was clearly my mission to drink brandy, distract women, run into debt, curse parade, turn out on show days, move from Windsor to Knightsbridge, and back from Knightsbridge, and otherwise enjoy life, and swear at ennui with you fellows in the Queen's. His mind was not open to it at first, but I soon improved his limited vision, and my name's now down at the Horse Guards, where, after a little neat jobbery, I dare say the thing'll soon be done."

"Is your governor manageable?" said I.

Curly yawned, and opened his blue eyes a little wider.

"Of course; I should cut him if he wasn't. You see he's a snob, (I wanted him to put on his carriage pannel

Who'd have thought it?
Cotton bought it!

but he declined,) and my mother's a Dorset; gave her title for his yellows. Now my brother Gus, poor devil! is the regular parvenu breed: short, thick, red whiskers, snub nose, and all the rest of it, while I, as you see, gentlemen," said Curly, glancing at himself with calm, complacent vanity, "am a remarkably good-looking fellow, eminently presentable and creditable to my progenitors: a second Spurling, and a regular Dorset. Therefore, the governor hates Gus, (sneaky I consider it, as it is through his remarkable likeness to him that Gus is fit to frighten his looking-glass,) but adores me, and lets me twist him round this little finger of mine, voyez-vous?"

Curly didn't add that this twisting process was generally applied for the benefit of his ill-favored elder, for Curly, like many of those who are worth the most, delighted in representing himself as worth nothing.

"And how's Julia?" asked De Vigne.

Curly looked as savage as *he* could look.

"Julia? Confound her! how should I know? She's been and hooked some old boy or other, I believe, poor devil!"

"Who's the poor devil?" laughed De Vigne; "the man for being caught, or you for being deserted? Take comfort, Curly; there never was a man jilted yet who didn't return thanks for it twelve months after. When I was twenty, and went over to Canada for six weeks' buffalo-hunting, I fell mad in love with a great Toronto beauty, a sheriff's widow. Such ankles she had, and didn't she show them just on the Ontario! It was really one of the most serious affairs I ever had, and she flirted à outrance, till she flirted me into a downright proposal. The most wide-awake man commits such *bêtises* when he is young. But who should come on the scene just then but a rich old fur-merchant, with no end of dollars, and a tremendous house at New York; and my little widow, thinking I was very young, and knowing nothing whatever of Vigne and its belongings, quietly threw me over, foreswore all the pretty things we'd said to one another in sledging and skating, and went to live at New York among the Broadway belles. I swore and suffered horribly; she turned the pampas into swamps, and absolutely made me utterly indifferent to bison. I lived on pipes and soda-water for a week, and recovered; but when I ran over to America last winter to see Egerton of the Rifles, I met in Quebec a dreadful woman, ten stone at the least, in a bright-green dress, with blue things in her hair and rubies for her jewels, her skin as yellow as gold, and as wrinkled as the *Fantyre's*; and I might have married that woman, with her shocking broad English, and her atrocious 'Do-tell!' What fervent thanks I returned for the fur-merchant's creation and my own

preservation ! So will you, Curly, when, ten years hence, you happen to drop in at the Snoozeinrest Rectory, and find Julia as stiff as her brown paper-tracts, and as vinegar as the moral lessons she gives her parishioners, restricting her pastor and master to three glasses, and making your existence miserable at dessert by the entrance of four or five brats with shrill voices and monkey propensities, who make you look at them and their mother with a thrill of the deepest rapture, rejoicing that, thank Heaven, you are not a family man !”

De Vigne spoke the truth. Why the deuce did not he remember that his passion for the Trefusis might be quite as utterly misplaced as his fancy for the Toronto widow, or the Cantab's flirtation with Miss Julia ? But, ah me ! if the truth were always in our minds, or the future always plain before us, should we make the fifty false steps that the wisest man among us is certain to rue before half his sands are run ? If they knew that before night was down the sea foam would be whirling high, and the curlews screaming in human fear, and the gay little boat lying keel upward on the salt ocean surf, would the pleasure party set out so fearlessly in the morning sunshine, with champagne flowing and bright eyes glancing, and joyous laughter ringing over the golden sands and up to the fleecy heavens ?

II.

WHAT WAS UNDER THE CARDS.

THAT night, after we were gone, old Fantyre sat with her feet on the fender of her dressing-room, sans wig, teeth, rouge, cosmetique, velvet, or lace ; and an uncommonly hideous old woman she must have looked in that guise, I

am certain, though, thank Heaven! I cannot speak to the fact from ocular observation. The Trefusis sat there, too, looking all the handsomer for dishabille, in a cerise-hued peignoir and fur slippers, and her thick long raven hair unbraided, and hanging to her waist.

"My dear," began the Fantyre, "do you think you hold the trumps in that game you're playing?"

"Certainly I do. Why?"

"Because I'm not so sure. You're playing fast and loose with De Vigne, and that don't always succeed. Brummel said to me, 'If we pique a woman, she is ours.' That's true enough with us, because we're such fools; nine times out of ten a woman don't care a rush for a man who's dying at her feet, while she's crazy about some ugly brute who takes no more notice of her than he does of his dirty boots. Women love to go to heel, and they'll crawl after a man who double-thongs them in preference to one who lets them rate him. Besides, we're jealous; we hate one another like poison from our cradles, and if a man neglects us we fancy he likes somebody else, and of course, that's quite enough to make us want to trap him away from her, whoever she be. But with men sometimes it's a dangerous game. They're the most impatient creatures in creation, and if one trout won't rise to the fly, they go off and whip another stream. All fish are alike pretty well to 'em, so that they fill their baskets. Men's aim is pleasure, and if you don't give it to 'em they will go somewhere else for it."

"True enough," said the Trefusis; "but, at the same time, to a good many men difficulty is everything. Men of hot passion and strong will delight in pursuit, and soon grow tired of victory. They enjoy knocking the bird over; that done, it loses all interest for them. De Vigne is such a man; rouse his pride, you win him—yield easily, he loses his interest, and you miss him."

"Maybe, my dear—maybe. You know him better than I do, and must manage him as you choose. I dare say he does like climbing over spikes and chevaux-de-frise to get what he fancies; he's the stamp of creature that's never happy out of excitement or danger, and Montaigne thinks like you: 'Elles nous battent mieux en fuyant, comme les Scythes.' How racy his old French is! I wish I had known that man! I say, Constance, those two friends of his shouldn't be with him too much, for they don't like us. One's that boy Chevasney."

"Boy, indeed!" echoed the Trefusis.

"But De Vigne is fond of him?"

"I believe so, but De Vigne is never influenced by anybody."

"I hope he may not be, except by you, and that won't be to his advantage, poor fellow! He's a very handsome pigeon, my dear—a very handsome one indeed!" chuckled the old lady. "But the other one is more dangerous than Chevasney; I mean that beautiful creature—what's his name?—Vivian Sabretasche. He don't think much about us, I dare say, but he don't like us. He sees through us, my dear, and, ten to one, he'll put De Vigne on his guard."

"De Vigne listens to nobody who comes between him and his passion of the moment; and how is it possible that Sabretasche should see through us, as you term it?"

"Not all our hand, my dear, but one or two cards. That calm nonchalant way of his conceals a wonderful deal of keen observation—too keen for us. Vivian Sabretasche is very witty and very careless, and the world tells very light stories of him; but he's a man that not Satan himself could deceive."

"Well, nobody wants to deceive him."

"Don't you want to marry his friend?"

"Enough of that, Lady Fanytre. I will neither be lec-

tured or schooled. You agreed to help me, but you agreed, too, to let me succeed in my own way. I tell you, I know how to manage him, and that before this year is out, in spite of Chevasney, Sabretasche, or anybody—yes, in spite of *himself*—I shall be Granville de Vigne's wife."

"I wish you may, my dear," said the Fantyre, with another chuckle. "Well, don't talk to me any more, child. Get Le Brun, will you, and read me to sleep."

III.

A DOUBLED-DOWN PAGE IN THE COLONEL'S BOOK OF LIFE.

WHAT a pace one lives at through the season! and, when one is fresh to it, before one knows that its pleasant, frothy, syllabub surface is only a cover to intrigues, petty spites, jealousies, partisanships, manœuvres—alike in St. Stephen's as at Almack's; among uncompromising patriots as among poor foreigners farming private banks round about St. James's Street; among portly aristocratic mothers, trotting out their innocent daughters to the market, as among the gauze-winged, tinseled, hard-worked deities of the coulisses—how agreeable it is! Illusion in one's first season lasts, I think, about the space of one month. With its blissful bandeau over our eyes, we really do admire the belles of the Ring and the Ride; we go to balls to dance, and to dinners for society; we swallow larks for ortolans, and Cremorne gooseberry for Clicquot's; we believe in the innocent demoiselles, who look so naïve, and such sweet English rosebuds at morning fêtes, and do not dream those glossy braids cover empty but world-shrewd little heads, ever plotting how to eclipse dearest Cecilia or

win old Hanton's coronet; we accept their mammas' invitations, and think how kindly they are given, not knowing that we are only asked because we bring Shako of the Guards with us, who is our bosom chum, and has fifteen thousand a year, and that, Shako fairly hooked, we, being a younger son, shall be gently dropped. We go to the Lords and Commons, and believe A. when he says he has the deepest admiration for his noble friend B., whom he hates like poison, and reverence D. when he pleads for the liberty of "the people," whom over his claret he classifies as "beastly snobs." We regard the coulisses with delight, as a temple whose eleusinia it is high honor to penetrate, and fall veritably in love with all those fair nymphs fluttering their spirit veils at Willis's, or clanking their spurs as Mazurka maidens. That delightful state of faith lasts about a month, then we discard the bandeau, and use an eye-glass instead; learn to confine ourselves to "Not bad-looking" before the handsomest Galatea in the Park; find out that dinners are a gathering to consume hock and turbot, but not by any means bound to furnish society; pronounce balls a bore, and grow critical of Moët's; are careful of the English rosebuds, knowing that, kept out of view, those innocent petals have thorns, which they know well how to thrust out and dextrously impale us on them; we take mammas' invitations at their worth, and watch the dragon's teeth opening for that luckless Shako, with grim terror of a similar fate; we laugh over rum-punch with a chum of ours, a whip in the Commons, who lets us into a thing or two concerning the grandiose jobbery of Downing Street, and finds out that coulisses atmosphere, however agreeable, is no exclusive boon; that its sesame is a bracelet to the first dancer, who, though she may take a Duke's brougham, is not insensible to even a Cornet's tribute if it come from Hunt and Roskill, and we give less

love and more Cremorne lobster-salad to the Willis and Mazurka maidens.

Such, at least, was my case; and when I was fairly in the saddle and off at a pace, like a Doncaster favorite's, through my first season, enjoyed it considerably, even when the bandeau *was* off my eyes, which, thanks to De Vigne and Sabretasche, took place very speedily.

Of De Vigne I did not see so much as if no Trefusis had been in being, for he was constantly after her, going with her to morning concerts, or Richmond luncheons; riding with her in the Park; lending her a horse too, by the way, for that showy bay of hers had come out of Bruton Mews, and no livery-stable mount is fit for any mortal, much less a female; attending her everywhere, but not as yet "compromising" himself, as, according to the peculiar code of honor in such cases, we may give a girl a bracelet with impunity to ourselves, but are lost if we hazard a diamond circlet for her "third finger." That comes rather hard on those poor women, by the way, for Lovelace may talk, and look, and make love in every possible style, yet, if he stops short of the "essential question," Lovelace may go scot free. We shall remark what a devil of a girl it is to flirt, and her sworn allies, who have expressed sympathy to her in crossed notes of the fondest pathos, agree among themselves "How conceited poor Laura is to fancy Lovelace *could* be serious! Why, dear, all that means nothing; only Laura, poor thing! has had so little attention, she doesn't know what it is. If she had had a man mad about her, as you and I have had, love—ah! do you remember poor Frank Cavendish at the race ball?" Whereon the sworn allies scent their vinaigrettes, indulging pleasurable recollections, and Lovelace burns Laura's lock of hair that he asked for under the limes in the moonlight; thinks "How deucedly near I was! must be more careful next

time," and wonders what sort of girls he shall find at Brighton.

De Vigne, however, as long as he would not come well up to hand, received no such flirting kindnesses from the Trefusis, not even so much as a note to thank him for his concert tickets, or a flower from the very bouquet he had sent her. Perhaps she knew by clairvoyance that her Cambridge azalea had gone ignominiously into the grate, for she tried on that style no more, but was coy and reserved, as if Hannah More had been her chaperone instead of bad old Sarah Lady Fantyre. That worried, excited, and roused De Vigne, and I saw, without needing much penetration, that he was drinking deeper and deeper of a stimulant which he never refused when it was fairly to his lips, and which brings worse follies, and wilder deeds, and more resistless delirium to men than lie in the hottest draught of Falernian, or a thousand grains of opium. Sabretasche and I used to swear at the power of the Trefusis, and lament De Vigne's infatuation together, but we could do nothing to weaken either: opposition to a man in love is like oil to fire.

Sabretasche was remarkably kind to me; he introduced me in his set, one of the most intellectual, exclusive, and raffiné in town; he admitted me to his charming dinners, a sort of Plato's banquets, where modern Pausaniases and Aristophanes met to discuss witty topics over choice cookery; and he let me into his studio, the most luxurious miniature art palace possible, where, when employed on his marble or his canvas—and no amateur skill was his either—no one was ever allowed to disturb him. His house was not large; he avowed a mortal dislike to a wilderness of a dwelling with enormous rooms and draughty galleries, but it was in exquisite taste. Noiseless footmen moved about

it in subdued liveries; the library was full of every provocation to literary gormandism; the drawing-rooms were of classic elegance, for he suffered no upholsterer to overload and overgild his rooms; the smoking-room was of epicurean comfort; the conservatories were full of every flower out of the Flora of every nation, I verily believe; and, finally, his "own room" was the essence of all the others, with flowers, pictures, busts, books, statuettes, a grand piano, and every style of lounging-chair, and opened out of his beloved studio, only divided from it by a massive curtain of green, bordered with gold. Yes, decidedly, Sabretasche knew to perfection the great art, "How to live," and he had every facility for enjoying life—riches, refined taste, art, intellect, hundreds of men who sought him, scores of women who courted him, a facile wit, a sweet temper—yet, somehow or other, you could trace in him a certain shadow, often dissipated, it is true, in the sunshine of his gay words and the music of his laugh, but certain to creep over him again an intangible shade of disappointment. Perhaps he had exhausted life too early; perhaps his excessive refinement was jarred by the very pleasures he sought; perhaps the intellectual and classic mould of his mind was not, after all, satisfied with the sedatives he gave it, though he devoted as many hours to his studio and library as to the boudoir and the card-room; however, as for speculating on Sabretasche, all town pretty well did that, more or less, but nobody in town was ever any the wiser for it. One morning I was going to breakfast with him; his nominal breakfast-hour was noon, though I believe he often rose very much earlier, took a cup of coffee à la Balzac, and chipped, or read, or painted in his studio. I took my way across the Gardens to Sabretasche's house, which was at the Marble-arch end of Park Lane, taking that détour for motives of my own. Gwen-

dolina Brandling, Carly's eldest sister, an exquisite nymph of eighteen, with crêpe hair, had confided to me the previous day, over strawberry-ice, at a fête at Twickenham, that she was in the habit of accompanying her smaller sisters in their morning walk with their governess, to "put her in mind of the country," and the Hon. Gwen being a fresh, honest-hearted, and exceedingly nice-looking girl, I took my way through the Gardens about eleven, looking out for Carly's sister among the pretty nursemaids, ugly children, and abominable, ankle-breaking, dress-tearing perambulators, that filled the walks. There was no Hon. Gwendolina at present, and I threw myself down under one of the trees, put my eye-glass in my eye, and took out that day's *Punch*, to while away the time till Gwen and her cameriste might come in sight. I was reading those delicious "Snob Papers," by that superb master of social satire, that cordial hater of frauds and follies, that genial lover of all that *might be* so noble, true, and earnest in human nature, whom it cuts me to the heart to think should ever so far consult the milk-and-water bias of the day as to tell us in the "Cornhill" (by-the-by, why that title? is it, by way of chaff, to intimate to us that we are to find tares instead of rich ripe wheat?) that he will always remember that "the ladies and children are at the table," forgetting that the time when the children come to dessert is the hour of abomination to everybody, and that it is when the ladies are gone and the claret goes round that the talk grows wise and witty, that graver questions are discussed, and stories worth hearing told. Oh, Lion! you love strong meat yourself; give it to those who reverence you, and catch at any crumbs that fall from your table.

I was immersed in those delicious cuts at snobbism, when an angry voice fell on my ear, speaking rapidly in Italian. I knew Italian well, a Neapolitan governess

having brought me up while I was in petticoats, and the words fell distinctly on my ear.

"Come, signor, why waste time about it? You know that your secret is worth more than I ask. You know you would give half your riches to make sure it would never be known by anybody, to efface it altogether, eh, *eccellenza*? Come! I ask a very low price; not worth jangling about; no more to you than a few scudi to me. Why waste time? You know I can bring her over in twenty-four hours, and then——"

"Take it, and begone!"

Ye gods! that last voice, cold, contemptuous, with a thorough-bred ring in it, though full of concentrated disgust and wrath, I recognized as Vivian Sabretasche's. Involuntarily I turned to look. Yes, it *was* he; our over-exclusive, over-refined Sabretasche; the most fastidious and the proudest man in town, in company with a shabbily though showily-dressed fellow, with rings on his fingers and an imperial on his chin, and a handsome, vulgar, insolent face, that wore at that minute as abominably avaricious and insulting a smile as ever was seen, as the Colonel shoved a roll of bank-notes into his hand, a passion of loathing and impatience quivering over his delicate features. The man laughed a laugh as impudent as his smile.

"Thank you, signor, a thousand thanks. I won't trouble you again till—I'm again in difficulties."

Sabretasche gave him no answer, but turning his back upon the man, folded his arms upon his chest, and walked away across the Gardens, with his head bent down, while the fellow counted the notes with glistening, triumphant eyes, crushed them up as if he loved their crisp new rustle, stroked his beard, whistled an air from "*Figaro*," and strolled on toward the gate, leaving me in a state of the

profoundest amazement at the vulgar acquaintance the fastidious Colonel had selected, and the secret by which this under-bred foreigner seemed able to hold in check so profound a man of the world as Sabretasche.

Just at this minute, Gwendolina and her duenna appeared in the distance, and I, dropping my eye-glass, went to meet them, lifted my hat with a surprised smile of pleasure, and talked of Grisi and Mario, of Balfe's new song, and Sims Reeves's last concert, with the hundred topics current in the season, while the little ones ran about, and the French governess chatted and laughed, and Gwen smiled and looked like a sunbeam, and told me about her ponies and dogs and flowers down in Hampshire. Poor Gwen! She is Madame la Duchesse de Vieillecour now, not over happy, I fear, despite the diamonds I saw flashing on her brow and neck last night at the Tuileries; in the gorgeous glories of her Champs Elysées hotel, in the light beauty of her summer villa at Enghien, in the gloomy state and magnificence of her château in the Côte d'Or, whose massive iron gates close like a death-knell, does she ever think, I wonder, of those spring mornings in the Gardens when *she* was in her spring-time too?

It was just twelve when I reached the Colonel's house. I was shown straight to his own room; and there he lay on one of the couches, calm, cool, imperturbable as ever, not a trace visible of his past excitement and irritation, very unlike a man with a secret hanging over his head and darkening his life. He stretched out his hand with a kind smile.

"Well, Arthur. Good morning to you. You are just in time for the match. Du Loo has not been here five minutes."

Du Loo was a heavy, good-humored, stupid fellow in the Blues, who prided himself on his fine teeth and his boxing,

and who was going, at half-past twelve, to have a little play with Fighting Chatney, one of the Fancy, who let himself out to beat gentlemen, in order that gentlemen might learn to beat.

On the carpet at Sabretasche's feet lay a great retriever, the one thing in the whole world for which he cared, chiefly, I believe, because it had trusted itself to his kindness.

"Poor old Cid!" said he, pausing in his breakfast to set the dog down some larded guinea-fowl. "I spoil him for sport, you say? Perhaps; but I don't want him for sport, and I make his life comfortable. I see, in him, one thing in this Via Dolorosa that is perfectly content and happy; and it is a treat to see it. He was a stray pup that followed me all the way from Woolwich to Kensington. I did not notice him at the time, but when I awoke the next morning he had rolled himself up in a ball on my bed, and was rubbing his nose against my cheek. That is two years ago. Cid and I have been fast friends ever since, and we love one another, don't we, old boy?"

The Cid looked up at him with two honest, tender brown eyes, and wagged his tail. Sabretasche had talked to him till, I believe, the dog understood him quite as well as I did.

"There are lots of women, Colonel," said Du Loo, "who'd bid high for the words you throw away on that dog."

"Possibly. But are any of them as faithful, and honest, and worthy, as my Cid? The Cid would like broken bones and a barn with me as well as French cookery and velvet cushions. I'm sorry I couldn't say as much for your fair ladies, Du Loo."

"The devil! no," yawned the Guardsman. "Catch a woman giving up her opera-box and her milliner! Why, the other night I saw Nelly Lacquers, the British Beggars'

Bank man's wife, got up no end at the Silverton Drum, laughing and talking, waltzing, and carrying pearls worth two thousand; and, by George! if there isn't a warrant out against her husband this morning for swindling! Mustn't she be a horrid, heartless little bit of flippery?"

"It doesn't follow," said Sabretasche. "Most likely he sent her there to disarm suspicion, while he sent off his specie to France or America, and got his passport to Calais. I never judge people: seemingly bad actions may have good motives, good ones may spring from base and selfish ends. 'Judge not, lest ye be judged.' When will the world take that gentle injunction to heart? Never! It loves to quote 'An eye for an eye,' 'Salvation is far from the wicked,' and 'Depart from me, ye accursed;' but it is singularly oblivious of the 'Mote and the beam,' of 'From your hearts forgive every one his trespasses,' and 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her.' If a man breaks his leg, he thinks it a 'sad accident,' a 'great affliction;' if he sees his friend break his, he has no hesitation in pronouncing it 'a judgment.'"

Du Loo stared at him.

"What the deuce, Colonel, are *you* turning sermon-izer?"

"No, my dear fellow, I have enough conscience still left not to preach before practicing; though truly, if that were a rule, few of our pulpits would be filled. But I have one virtue—tolerance; therefore I may preach *that*. How can we presume to pronounce verdicts on each other when we know so little of the inner life, the real motives, actions, or position of men with whom one is in daily intercourse? Vices there are, of course, on which law and public feeling must execute justice for the preservation of any comfort or any virtue; but even there, surely, if one 'hate the sin,' one may 'love the sinner;' and we have a great deal too much

to do—looking at home—to have either leisure or right to carp at others, much less to condemn them. There is your friend, Fighting Chatney. Now for your seventh heaven, Du Loo.”

“And yours too, Sabretasche?”

“No. I learnt to hold the belt; of course I should be sorry for another man to be able to beat me in any game; but there is a degree of absurdity in two mortals setting solemnly to work to pommel one another; there is something unpoetic, and coarse, and savage, about blood and bruises, and, besides, it is so much exertion. However, go at it; it is for Arthur’s delectation, and I can go into my studio if I am tired.”

Du Loo and his pet of the fancy retired to the far end of the room, and there set-to, delivering from the left shoulder, and drinking as much beer between their rounds as a couple of draymen. As the match had been arranged for my express pleasure, of course I watched it with the deepest interest, though Sabretasche’s remarks gave the noble art a certain degree of ludicrousness, mingled with the admiration with which I had been accustomed to regard such “little mills.” Du Loo finally floored the bruiser, to his own extreme glorification, while the pet very generously growled out to him that he might be as great a man as the Tipton Slasher, if he would train himself properly. Du Loo left, and Sabretasche asked me to stay ten minutes to let him finish a picture which he had been amusing himself by taking of me in crayons—a portrait, by the way, which is a far better one than any I have ever had done by R. A.’s, and which my mother still cherishes devotedly at Longholme.

“What a strange fellow Du Loo is,” said the Colonel, “or, rather, what a commonplace one! The man’s greatest delight is a Moulsey mill, and his ambitions are locked

up in the brutalities of the Ring. Of any higher world—of the world of imagination and ideal, of affections and aspirations—he is utterly ignorant. Talk to him of the intellectual thirst of the more refined charms, which we, who are lovers of art and genius, feel and enjoy, you might as well discourse to him in Hebrew. Take him out under the summer stars, make him listen to the silvery chimes of the night, place him amid the deep and holy silence of nature, he would look bored, yawn, and ask for his cigar. Positively, Arthur, he makes one feel one's link to the animals mortifyingly close. In truth, the distance between the zoophytes and man is not wider than the great gulf between a Goethe and a prize-fighter, is it? It is proportion of brain which makes the master superior to his dog; why should not different proportion of brain make as distinct a mark between the clod of the valley and the cultured scholar or poet? Truly, men are born stamped by nature helots and masters, and the master will assert his supremacy, whether the "coal from the altar" be laid on his lips from the ingle-nook of a cottage or the censer of a palace. But why am I talking all this to you? You have more amusing occupation than to listen to my fancies. Turn a little nearer the light. That is it! Have you seen De Vigne to-day?"

"No; he was gone to Albert Smith's with the Trefusis and Fantyre, confound them! Do you think she will win, Colonel?"

"My dear boy, how can I tell? I think she will if she can. 'Donne gentile devote d'amore' generally manage to marry a man if they have full play with him. If De Vigne only saw her in morning calls when his head was cool, and others were with him, possibly he might keep out of it; but she waltzes with him—she waltzes remarkably well, too—she shoots Parthian glances at him in the tête-à-tête

of conservatories, after the mess champagne; moreover, ten to one, in some of those soft moments, he will say more than, being a man of honor, he can unsay."

"And be cursed for life."

"Possibly. Love does that for a good many, and on the baseless fantasy of early eye-love many men have surrendered their entire lives to one who has made them a blank! Troublesome eyes yours are, Arthur. I can't make out their color. What present will you give Mrs. De Vigne on her wedding-day?"

"Confound her, none!" I shouted. "He's a vast deal too good for fifty such as she—a cold, calculating, ambitious, loveless woman——"

"One would think you were in love with her yourself, Chevasney. Let me catch that terrific expression, it would do for a Jupiter Tonans."

"And she is so wretchedly clever!" I groaned.

"In artifice! yes; by education! no. Her knowledge is utterly superficial. I cannot imagine where she has lived. She speaks shockingly ungrammatical French, with a most atrocious English accent; she neither plays nor sings. We were speaking of Granvella the other day; she fancied him a poet. We referred to Mont Thabor; she did not know who had fought there. Yet she waltzes, rides, and dresses splendidly, and has a shrewd, sharp sarcasm, which passes muster as wit among her admirers. In fact, she is a paradox; and I shall regret nothing more than to see De Vigne misled out of his right senses by her magnificent beauty, stooping to tie himself for life to a woman with whom he will have nothing in common—who will have neither feeling to satisfy his heart nor mind to satisfy his intellect, and with whom I would bet great odds a week after the honeymoon he will be disgusted."


"Can't you persuade him?" I began. He stopped me

with an expressive gesture; he had much of the Italian gesticulation.

"Persuade?" Mon garçon, if you want to force a man into any marriage, persuade him against it. Tell a man not to fall in love, and he will fall in love straightway. No one should touch love affairs. Third persons are certain to barbotter the whole thing. The more undesirable the connection, and the more you interfere, the more surely will the 'subject' grow obstinate as a mule under your treatment. Call a person names to anybody over whom she has cast a glamour, and if he have anything of the gentleman or the lover in him, out of sheer amour propre, and a sort of wrong-headed, right-hearted chivalry, he will swear to you she is an angel."

"And believe it, perhaps."

"Most likely, until she is his wife! There is a peculiar magic in that gold circlet, badge of servitude for life, which changes the sweetest, gentlest, tenderest fiancée into the stiffest of domestic tyrants. Don't you know that, before marriage, a lady 'loves to see gentlemen smoke, it is so manly;' and, after it, 'never allows that filthy tobacco in her house.' Don't you know that, when she's engaged to him, she is so pretty and pleasant with his men friends, passes over the naughty stories she hears of him from 'well-intentioned' advisers, and pats the new mare that is to be entered for the Chester Cup; twelve months after the quarry is lured, his chums have the cold shoulder and the worst wine; she gives him fifty curtain orations on his disgraceful conduct with his cousin Julia, whom he ventured to take to one morning concert, while madame was in bed reading French novels. And as for racing—he daren't mention it in her presence; hides his *Bell's Life* as a schoolboy hides *Tristram Shandy*, and wonders if the peevish woman who comes down an hour too late for breakfast can



by any possibility be identical with the smiling bien coiffée young lady who poured his coffee out for him with such dainty fingers and pleasant words when he stayed down at her papa's for the shooting."

I laughed. "Don't ever get married yourself, Colonel, for the sake of Heaven, women, and consistency!"

He smiled too, as he answered :

"'A young man married is a man that's marred.' That's a golden rule, Arthur; take it to heart. Anne Hathaway, I have not a doubt, suggested it. Experience is the best asbestos, only, unluckily, one seldom gets it before it is too late to use it, and one's hands are burned irrevocably. Shakspeare took to wife the ignorant, rosy-cheeked, Warwickshire peasant girl, at *eighteen*! Poor fellow! I picture him, with all his untried powers, struggling like newborn Hercules for strength and utterance, and the great germ of unspoken poetry within him tinging all the common realities of life with a rose hue; the lion genius that was stirring in his heart giving him power to see with the God-like vision that is only given to the few; the fairies nestling in the cowslip chalices, and the golden gleam of Cleopatra's sails, to feel the 'spiced Indian air' by night, and the wild working of kings' ambitious lust; knowing, by the divine intuition of the creative force, alike the soft low chimes of nature unheard by common ears, and the fierce schemes and passions of a world from which social position shut him out. I see him in his hot imaginative youth finding his first love in the yeoman's daughter at Shottery, strolling with her by the Avon, making her an 'odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds,' and dressing her up in the fond array of a boy's poetic imaginings. Then—when he had married her, he, with the passionate ideals of Juliets and Violas, Ophelias and Hermiones in his brain and heart, must have awoke and found that the voices so

sweet to him were dumb to her. The 'cinque spotted cowslip-bells' brought only thoughts of wine to her; when he was watching 'certain stars shoot madly from their spheres,' she most likely was grumbling at him for mooning there after curfew-bell; when he was learning Nature's lore in 'the fresh cup of the crimson rose,' she was dinning in his ear that Hammet and Judith wanted worsted socks; when he was listening in fancy to the sea-maid's song, and feeling in his brain grow larger, clearer, fonder, the imaginings to which a world long ages after still stands reverentially to listen, she was buzzing behind him and bidding him go card the wool, and weeping that, in her girlhood, she had not chosen some rich glover or ale-taster, instead of idle, useless, wayward Willie Shakspeare. Poor fellow! I can picture him in his vehement youth and his regretful manhood. He did not write, without fellow-feeling and yearning over souls similarly shipwrecked, that wise saw 'A young man married is a man that's marred!' My dear Arthur, I beg your pardon. I am keeping you a most unconscionable time, but really your eyes are very troublesome. I say, some men are coming here for lansquenet to-night, will you come too? and do bring De Vigne if you can. One sees nothing of him now, and there are few so well worth seeing. What a wicked fellow I am, ladies would say, to lead you into high play. I can't think it myself; you would be led into it without me, and I see no more harm in high play than in making ducks and drakes of one's money after racers, pictures, subsoilings, model cottages, or any other hobby; and it has this advantage, that if one loses, one loses to one's friends. Besides, lansquenet rouses one a little; and what a blessing that is! Au revoir, mon cher. I have an immense deal of work before me. I am going to the Yard to bid for Steel Patterson's cream filly; then to the Twelfth's mess luncheon;

next I have an appointment to meet the Godolphin—all town's talking of that fair lady, so I reveal no secret; and après, I must dress to dine in Eaton Square, and I much question if any of them are worth the exertion they will cost me, except, indeed, the cream filly!"

Wherewith the Colonel dismissed me. As I saw him that night, when De Vigne and I went there for the promised lansquenet, courteous, urbane, gay, nonchalant, witty, I saw no trace of any mysterious secret, nor any lingering touch of the haughty anger and impatient disgust he had shown to his singular companion of the morning. But, then, no more did I see, what all the world said they saw, that Vivian Sabretasche was a heartless libertine, an unprincipled gambler, an egotist, a skeptic, a sinner of the deepest dye, to be condemned immeasurably in boudoir scandals and bishops' dinners, and only to be courted, and visited, and have his crimes passed over because he was rich and was the fashion.

PART THE FOURTH.

I.

THE LITTLE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES.

"ARTHUR, who do you think has gone to the dogs through that rascally British Beggars' Bank?" said De Vigne one afternoon, unharnessing himself after one of the greatest bores in life, a field-day in Hyde Park, and talking from his bedroom to me, as I sat drinking sherry and Seltzer before going into my rooms in the barracks.

"How should I know, out of half a million," I responded.

"What an awfully warm day! Thank Heaven, there'll soon be an end of the season!"

"Do you remember old Tressillian, of Weive Hurst?"

"Of course. The devil! you don't mean him?"

"I am sorry to say I do; he has lost every penny. To think of that scoundrel, Sir John Lacquers, flinging Bible texts at your head, thrusting his charities into your face, going to church every Sunday as regularly as a verger, and to morning prayers on a week-day, building his almshouses and attending his ragged-schools, and now he's cut off to Boulogne, with a neat surplus, I'll be bound, hidden up somewhere; and widows, and children, and ruined gentlemen will reap the harvest he has sown! Bah! it makes one sick of humanity!"

"And is Tressillian one of his victims?"

"I believe you! I saw his name on the list some days ago, and on Monday, as I was riding out by Apsley House-corner at a trot, Tally-ho saw fit to knock down a little girl, or, rather, I to let him; I ought to have been looking where I was going, instead of staring through my glass after the women in their barouches. There was an old gentleman with her, who picked her up, not hurt, but pretty considerably frightened; she was a pretty little thing, and didn't cry naturally. I got off to apologize, and, to my surprise, recognized Boughton Tressillian. The little girl was the child that used to be at Weive Hurst—daughter—no, granddaughter, wasn't she?"

"Little Alma. Yes. We used to say she'd be a pretty woman. Well, go on."

"I was very pleased to see him. You know I always liked him exceedingly. I asked him where he was living; he said, with a smile, 'In lodgings in Surrey Street; you know I can't afford Maurigy's now.' And I called on him there yesterday; such a detestable lodging-house, Arthur!

Brummagem furniture and Irish maids! He is just the same simple, courtly, old grand seigneur as ever. I'm not a susceptible man, as you know, nor a sentimental, but, I give you my honor, it cut me to the heart to see that gallant old fellow, whom we last knew down at Freston-hills as proud a country gentleman as any round, utterly beggared through that psalm-singing, pharisaical swindler, and bearing his reverses like the plucky French noblesse that my father used to shelter at Vigne after '98, and of whom my mother used to tell me tales, to show me, as she said, that a gentleman was a gentleman always, whatever his externals, while his honor was safe and his name untarnished."

"And has he nothing now?"

"Nothing. His entire principal was placed in Lacquers's hands. Weive Hurst is gone to pay his creditors, and one can do nothing to aid him, he is so deucedly—no, not deucedly, but so *rightly* proud. Come with me to-day and see him; we shall drive there in ten minutes, and we must be doubly attentive to him now. There will be just time between this and mess if you ring and tell them to bring the tilbury round."

The tilbury soon came round, and the new steel grays, tandem, (to the imminent danger of everybody's life that happened to be in the streets while they paced through them, though De Vigne was a magnificent whip, and his having run over Alma Tressillian did make him, for a wonder, rather mindful of the existence of applewomen and cabs,) soon set us down in Surrey Street.

One of the Irish maids that so excited De Vigne's disgust showed us up stairs. Mr. Tressillian was not at home, but was expected in every minute; and we sat down to wait for him. Through the windows, on those dismal leads that admit to the denizens of Surrey Street a view of the

murky Thames and steam transports of the Cockneys, the little girl was standing, who, as soon as she caught sight of De Vigne, ran into the room and welcomed him with exceeding warmth and an accès of color that might have flattered him much had she been a few years older.

She was about ten or eleven, an awkward and angular age; but she had neither angles nor awkwardness, and was as pretty as they ever are in their growing time, with hair of that glistening burnished gold, bright in shade as in sunshine, and deep blue eyes, brilliant and dark under her black silken lashes, which promised, in due time, to do a good deal of damage. In her little dainty Paris-made dress of soft white muslin and floating blue ribbons, the child looked ill fitted for the gloomy atmosphere of Surrey Street. Poor little thing! a few weeks before she had been the heiress of Weive Hurst, now, thanks to that godly creature, Sir John Lacquers, her future promised to be a struggle almost for daily bread.

"I am so glad you are come!" she exclaimed, running up to De Vigne. "Grandpapa will be so pleased to see you, and you will do him good. When he is alone he grows so sad, and I can do nothing to help him. I am no companion for him, and if I try to amuse him—if I sing to him, or talk, or draw—I think it only makes him worse: he remembers Weive Hurst still more!"

"Do you not miss Weive Hurst, Alma?" asked De Vigne.

The child's eyes filled with tears, and the blood rushed over her face.

"*Miss Weive Hurst!* Oh, you do not guess how much, or you would not ask me! My beautiful, darling Weive Hurst, with its grand waving trees, and its bright flowers, and its sweet sunshine! *Miss Weive Hurst!* In this

cold, dark, smoky place, where I never see the sun, or hear the birds, or feel the summer wind! *Miss Weive Hurst!* Where every flower knew me, and let me kiss it when it opened its eyes to the morning sun! *Miss Weive Hurst!—*”

And the little lady stopped in her vehement oration, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

“What an excitable little thing!” said De Vigne, raising his eyebrows; then he bent gently toward her, as courteously as if she had been the Duchess of Turquoises. “I beg your pardon, Alma; I am sorry if I vexed you. I could not know how much you loved your home; and perhaps—who knows?—you will go back to it again some day.”

She raised her head eagerly.

“Ah! if I could hope that!”

“Well, we *will* hope it!” smiled De Vigne. “Some of those flowers that love you so much will tell the fairies that sleep in their buds to come and fetch you back because they want to see their little queen.”

She looked at him half in surprise.

“Ah! you believe in fairies, then? I love you for that.”

“Thank you. Do you, then?”

“Of course,” said Alma, with the reproving tone of a believer in sacred creed to a heathenish skeptic. “Shakespeare did, you know. He writes of Ariel and Puck, Peasblossom and Cobweb, who ‘pluck the wings from painted butterflies,’ and ‘kill cankers in the musk rose-buds.’ Milton, too, believed in Fairy Mab and the Goblin, whose ‘shadowy flail had thrashed the corn that ten day-laborers could not end.’ Flowers would not be half flowers to *me* without their fairies, and, besides,” continued Miss Alma, with the decision of a person who clinches an argument, “I have seen them, too!”

"Indeed!" said De Vigne. "But so have I."

"Where?" asked Alma, breathless as a dilettante to whom one breathes tidings of a lost Corregio.

"There!" said De Vigne, lifting her up in his iron grasp before the high mirror on the mantle-piece.

She laughed, but turned upon him with injured indignation.

"What a shame! You do not believe in them one bit—not the least more than grandpapa. I will not love you now—no, never again!"

"My dear child," laughed De Vigne, "even your sex don't love and unlove *quite* in such a hurry. Don't you care for your grandpapa, then, because he has never seen fairies?"

"Care for grandpapa! O yes!" she cried, passionately, "as much as I hate—oh, *hate!*—those wretched, cruel men who have robbed him of his money. I would try not to care for Weive Hurst if he were happy, but he will never be happy without it any more than I."

"Do you remember me, Alma?" I asked, to change her thoughts.

She shook her head.

"Do you remember him?"

She looked very tenderly and admiringly on De Vigne.

"Oh yes! When I read 'Sintram,' I thought of him as Sir Folko."

De Vigne laughed.

"You bit of a child, what do you understand of 'Sintram'?"

"I understand Sir Folko, and I wish I had been Gertrude."

"Then you wish you had been my wife, mademoiselle?"

Alma considered gravely for a moment, looking steadily in De Vigne's face:

"Yes, I think I should like you to take care of me as he took care of Gertrude."

We went off into shouts of laughter, which Alma could not understand. She could not see she had said anything laughable.

"I thought you were never going to love me again, Alma? A wife ought to love her husband," said De Vigne.

Alma made a moue mutine and turned away, her blue ribbons and her gold hair fluttering impatient defiance. Just then her grandfather came in, the stately, silver-haired, gentle-toned master of Weive Hurst.

"How do you do?" cried De Vigne. "I am having an offer made me, Mr. Tressillian, though it is not leap year. I hope you will give your consent?"

"I will never marry anybody who does not believe in fairies," interrupted Alma, running back again to her leads.

"If she make a like proposal five or six years hence to any man, she'll hardly have it neglected," said I, when Tressillian had recalled who I was, and shaken hands with me.

Tressillian smiled sadly. "Her love will be a curse to her, poor child, for she will love too well; as for her being neglected, she will not have the gilding necessary to make youth protected, beauty appreciated, or talent go down, if she should chance to have the two latter as she grows up."

"Which she is pretty sure to have, unless she alter dreadfully," said De Vigne.

Boughton Tressillian sighed. "Yes, she is pretty enough, and she is clever. I have educated her entirely, and I believe she already knows much more than young ladies who have just 'finished.' She would learn even better still if she were not so wildly imaginative. Poverina! she is ill

fitted to grapple with the world. I never guessed but what her life would be one of affluence and luxury, or I would never have united her fortunes to mine. Whether I spend my few more years between four bare walls or not, matters little; but hers——. Well, De Vigne, what news to-day? Is the Liberal ministry going to keep in or not?"

De Vigne stayed some half hour chatting with him, telling him all the amusing on dits of the clubs, all the *pros* and *cons* of the new Reform Bill, and all the fresh political tittle-tattle of the morning, while Tressillian, after that single expression of regret for Alma, alluded no more to his own affairs, and discussed politics, literature, and all the current topics with the intelligence and interest of a man of intellect, entertaining us with the same cheerful ease as he had done at Weive Hurst, evidently meeting his reverses with a philosophy of the highest yet of the simplest order; and that true pride which knew that it was he himself, not his mere entourages or social position, which rendered him worthy to be sought and respected. De Vigne was more courtly, more delicate, more respectful to the ruined gentleman than he was to many a leader of high ton, for, haughty and imperious on occasion as he was, there was a touch of true chivalry in his character. Go down in the world, De Vigne stretched out his hand to you, be you what you might; rise high, and he cut you, or snubbed you, as he might see fit. De Vigne was not like the world, messieurs.

"How I should enjoy straightening my left arm for the benefit of that cursed hypocrite of the British Beggars' Bank," began De Vigne, "cooling the tilbury back again through the Strand; and, so far forgetting himself in his irritation as to venture to use the whip to his wheeler, who revenged the insult by a *pas d'extase*, which produced the most frightful commotion among the omnibuses

full of City men, whose conductors swore in most inelegant language at "the confounded break-neck nob!" "The morality of the age is too ridiculous! On a poor banker's clerk, who, with a sick wife and starving children, yields to one of the fiercest temptations that can beset a man, and takes one drop out of the sea of gold around him, it crushes so severely, and seems to think penal servitude too kind a boon for him! To a lying pharisee, who has reduced forty thousand people, who trusted in his honor, to want or utter ruin, who has taken alike the poor curate's hard savings and the landed gentleman's large principal, the world is lenient, because he stuck his name on missionary lists, and came to public meetings with the Bible on his lips, and, after a little time has slipped away, men will see him installed in a Roman palace, or a Paris hotel, and will flock to his soirées by the dozens!"

"Of course; don't you think that if Mephistopheles set up here in Belgravia, and gave the best dinners in London, he would find lots of people to dine with him?"

"Sans doute. Men measure you by what you give them. If you're a poor devil with only small beer in your cellar, you are ostracized, though you be the best and wisest man in Athens; if you can give them claret, they will come and drink it with you, and only discuss your sins behind your back; and if by any chance you should have pipefuls of Johannisberg, and Tokay, and priceless Madeira, you will have all the cardinal virtues voted to you without your giving a single testimony to your even recognizing the cardinal virtues at all. The world is very fond of taking a scapegoat whom it flogs, as his governess flogged a peasant boy for the dauphin's sins; and that scapegoat they will, in their periodical fits of morality, as Macaulay has it, hunt down, and torture, and trample to death, with every inconceivable ingenuity. But, take my word for it,

that scapegoat is always some ruined man, or some boy-poet goaded on by cruelty or starvation, or some woman such as she to whom the founder of their creed was content to say, 'Go and sin no more;' never by any chance the sinner whose phylacterics are broad and horn exalted, and at whose groaning table they may still eat, and drink, and be merry. Hallo! gently, gently, Psyche! what a hard mouth she has. Confound her! she will set Cupid off again, and I shall figure in the police reports as taken up for furious driving. I say, what can Tressillian do?"

"Do?" I repeated.

"Yes. What can he do that I can find him? He is a gentleman and a scholar, but his age shuts him out from any post such as he could ever accept. He has no money—he must do something; indeed, it is his deepest wish. I must talk to Sabretasche; he has no end of interest everywhere if he would only exert it. I think he would if I asked him, so that we might get some pleasant gentleman-like sinecure for Tressillian, where he would not have much to remind him painfully of his reverses. I'll see. My family can get most things for asking, the distaff side at the least; there are no De Vignes on the face of the earth besides myself; one scapegrace is enough, I suppose. By the way, Chevasney, you'll try and get leave to come down with me on the 1st to Vigne. It's a horrid bore, but I can't get mine till the 31st. I wanted it a month earlier."

"To go to Brighton?" I knew the last week in July would see the Fantyre and Trefusis transplanted from Bruton Street to Kemp Town.

He laughed. "Well, Brighton's very pleasant in its season, and town is utterly detestable in August, when everybody not tied by the leg as we are is away yachting in the Levant, or fishing in Norway, or bagging black game on the moors, or doing something worth doing.

However, we must make up for it among the turnips and stubble. I think my preserves are the best in the country; but I never will have a battue. Cooping up tame pheasants, who come around you as if they were going to be fed, and calling it sport to shoot 'em off by the score at a yard or two's distance, is too ridiculous. A boy used to a pop-gun could do as much as that. You must come down, Arthur, I can't do without you; it's a crying cruelty to coop military men up in the shooting season; besides, you are a great pet of my mother's."

"Doesn't she ever come to town?"

"Oh, yes; but her health is delicate. She has no daughte^rs to bring out, you know, and I think she prefers the country in the spring and summer. Here one loses summer altogether. We don't know such a word; it is merged into 'the season,' and the flowers seem to grow on ladies' bonnets instead of meadow land. Well! I like it best. I prefer society to solitude. St. Simon Stylites had very fine meditations, I dare say, and a magnificent bird's-eye view of the country, but I must say Aristippus's myrtle wreaths and Falernian would seem more like life to me, and I fancy I should see more of human nature in the Pré Catalan than the prairies."

"Yet you ~~g~~mad after nature sometimes."

"Of course. There is a simplicity of grandeur about the wide stretch of sea in a sunny dawn, or the far sweep of gray hills and golden birch woods in a Highland moor, beside which the fret and flippery, the toil and turmoil of human life, shrink back rebuked into insignificance. No man who has any manhood left in him at all but feels the better for the fresh rush of mountain wind and the calm solitude of midnight stars. But for all that, I am neither poet nor philosopher enough to live with nature always, and *forswear* the coarser elements of life, lansquenet, rag,

ing, Coralies, champagne, and all one's other habitual agréments. Hang it, Arthur, why do you set me defining; can't you let me enjoy? When a man begins to define his love, it's a sign he's getting tired of it, and wants to reason himself back into it; and when he begins to define life, to divide it into animal and spiritual, and philosophize upon it, it is ten to one he's grown sick of the whole thing, or some way or other missed the right key to amusing himself in it. Ten years hence I will theorize on life as much as you please, just now I prefer taking it as it comes, passing the flavorless flowers, and sucking all the honey out of the roses and mignonette. There! we did the distance in no time. Remind me to speak to the messmen about that would-be '15 port. It is the most daring sloes-and-damsons that was ever palmed off on anybody. Thank Heaven nobody can deceive me in wine."

"Nor in anything else?"

"I hope not. If they can, I have not knocked about the world to much purpose."

If De Vigne set his mind on doing anything, whether it was taking a bullfinch or winning a woman, hooking a salmon or canvassing a county, he never rested till it was done; therefore, having taken Boughton Tressillian's cause steadily to heart, he set all the levers going that were available to find something suitable to the old man's broken fortunes and refined taste. With his head and heart full of the Trefusis, and his time more than filled up with his favorite pursuits and amusements, I thought it was very good of him to think to such useful purpose for a man who had known little of him since his boyhood, and to give so much time as he did to calling and soliciting and letter-writing in the old gentleman's cause. He never let Sabretasche alone till the Colonel, who knew everybody, from royal princes and cabinet ministers downward, used his

interest too, a thing Sabretasche detested doing, because, as he said, it "gives you so much trouble, and lays you under obligation, a debt nobody ever allows you to forget that you owe them." To please De Vigne, however, the Colonel exerted himself, and between them they procured a consulate for Tressillian at a large pleasant town on the Mediterranean shore, which had of late years become almost an English settlement, whose climate was exquisite, scenery perfect, combined with admirable English and Italian society, according to the elegant language of the guide-books, who told no lies about it for a wonder; guide-books, perhaps from a feeling of generosity, generally making it a point of honor to praise what nobody cares two straws for, and omit the one thing that is worth a journey to inspect, and about which you are certain to be beset with questions from everybody on your return home.

Anybody who wanted to see the side of De Vigne's character that made those who really knew him love him with the love of Jonathan for David, (a character as unknown to the generality of people as David's was to those who only judged him when his passions were up and he slew Uriah, and snatched away Bathsheba, and did many other naughty things,) should have seen him offering his consulship to Tressillian, with the most delicate tact and refinement of feeling, so that the ruined gentleman could feel no obligation that could touch his pride, and could receive it only as a thoughtful forestalling of his wishes. That Tressillian felt it deeply I could see, but De Vigne refused all thanks.

"What had he done?" he persisted. "Nothing at all. Asked his cousin for a thing, to which Ferrers was only enchanted to be able to appoint a gentleman of birth and classical education; if any was obliged it was Ferrers, and he himself was only delighted to be the first to offer to

Tressillian anything Tressillian would honor them all by accepting."

Tressillian shook his head; he felt the kindness all the deeper for De Vigne's disclaimer of it. "You are a noble fellow, De Vigne; you will find your reward some day."

"My dear sir," laughed De Vigne—when he felt things at all he generally turned them off in a jest—"I get many more rewards than I deserve, I fancy; my life's all prizes and no blanks, except now and then the blank of satiety. I am not one of those who 'do good and blush to find it known,' for these simple reasons, that I never do any good at all, and have not blushed since I was seven and fell in love with my mother's lady's-maid, a most divine French-woman, with gold ear-rings, who eventually took up with the butler—bad taste, after me, was it not? You won't desert me for anybody I hope, Alma? You will see sublime Italians at Lorave?"

"They will not be as handsome as you are, Sir Folko," responded Miss Tressillian, with frank admiration.

"Thank you, cher enfant; you will teach me to blush if you flatter me so much. Will you take me in, Alma, if I and my yacht call upon you any time?"

"Oh, do! do!" cried Alma, vehemently, "and take me on the sea, and I will show you the mermaids under the waves, with their necklets of sea-shells and their fans of pink weed. You will see them, indeed you will, if you will only believe in them."

"Most apt illustration of faith," laughed De Vigne. "People see tables turn, and violins dance with broomsticks, and hear Shakspeare talk through a loo-table, by sheer force of believing in them. When will that child ever learn to come down to the coarse realities of actual every-day existence?"

"No," said Tressillian, "I am afraid I have hardly taken

the best way of educating her for the real world. She should have gone to school, to learn the sober practicalities, and business tendencies, and methodical views of English schoolgirls. Her solitary life, with books and flowers, has encouraged the enthusiasm, imagination, and demonstrativeness, that come, I suppose, with her foreign blood; but then, I always thought she would be raised above heeding or considering the world, much more above ever working in it. Now that I shall not have the time to devote to her, I must find some one who will."

A few days afterward, Tressillian, with his granddaughter and an English governess he had engaged for her, set off for Lorave. De Vigne and I saw them off at the South-Eastern station, and little Alma cried as bitterly at parting with De Vigne as almost any woman who loved him could have done, only the tears were not got up for effect, and washed off no rouge, as most of theirs would have done. De Vigne kissed her—she was pretty enough to win such condescension; it took something *very* pretty to tempt De Vigne; he was too great an angler to count all fish that came in his net—consoled her with the promise of a yachting trip to Lorave, and came away from the station to drive the Trefusis down to dinner at the Star and Garter, where he was going to give an entertainment of unusual extravagance and splendor even for that dashing hotel, of which Constance Trefusis was undisputed regina, and looked it too, drinking Badminton with much the same air as Juno must have worn drinking ambrosia, and outshining all the women in beauty, and figure, and toilette, for which last the women of course hated her, and respected her *à la fois*; for, cordially as a lady detests a handsome sister, it is notable that she no less despises a plain or ugly one. To be handsome a woman thinks an unpardonable crime in her rival, and to be plain is a most contemptible faux pas.

I can see De Vigne now, sitting at the head of the table, that bright June evening, at Richmond. How happy he looked! his broad, white forehead slightly flushed with pleasure and triumph, his dark eagle eyes flashing fire, or beaming softness and tenderness on the Trefusis, his firm lips curved into a joyous smile, his musical and singularly clear-toned voice ringing with a careless, happy harmony. Dear old fellow! Life's best gifts seemed to lurk for him in that goblet of champagne he lifted to his lips, with a fond pledge (by the eyes) to Constance. Yet, if he had known, he would have filled the glass with hemlock rather than have coupled the champagne cup with *her* name. Ah, well! he is not the only man for whom the name that rang so sweetly, breathed in the toast of love, has chimed a bitter death-knell through all his after-life.

The Trefusis did her best to lure him into a proposal that night, with her black eyes and brilliant smiles, as he sat by her at dinner, and leaned out of the window afterward beside her, the delicate perfume of her hair mingling with the fragrance of lilies, and roses, and heliotropes from the garden below, the low jug-jug of the nightingale joining with their own low voices, and the voluptuous summer starlight gleaming on both their faces—his, impassioned, eager, earnest; hers, triumphant, exquisitely handsome, but the beauty of the rock-crystal which will melt neither for wintry frost nor tropic sunshine. She did her best, and the hour and the scene alike favored her. She bent forward, she looked up in his face, and the moon's rays gave to her eyes a liquid sweetness never their own. The nightingale sang softly of love under the dark laurustinus-boughs; the flowers sent up their more luxurious fragrance with the rich evening dew. De Vigne began to lose control over himself; the passion within him took the reins; he who all his life through had denied himself nothing,

neither knew nor cared how to check it. He bent toward the Trefusis, his fiery pulse beating loud; his moustaches touched her low smooth brow: Heaven knows what he might have said, but I went up to them, ruthlessly:

"De Vigne, the horses are put to, and Miss Trefusis wants to be in town by eleven, in time for Mrs. Delany's ball: everybody's gone, or going."

A fierce oath was muttered under De Vigne's moustaches—he can be fiery enough if he's crossed. The Trefusis gave me a look—well! such as you, madame, will never give a man if you are prudent, even though he be your lover's fidus Achates, and comes in just when he is not wanted. Then she rose, drawing on her gloves with a sweet, courteous smile:

"Oh! thank you, Mr. Chevasney; how kind of you to come and tell us. I would not be late at dear Mrs. Delany's for the world, you know: she is a very pet friend of mine."

I had saved him that time, and, idiot-like, triumphed at my success. Might I not have known that no forty-horse power can keep a man from committing himself if he is bent upon it? and might I not have known that if a fellow enters himself for a steeple-chase with a woman, she will have cantered in and carried off the cup before he has saved half the distance, let him pride himself upon his jockeyship never so highly?

I had saved De Vigne, and I don't think he bore me any good-will for it, for after he had bestowed the Trefusis in the Fantyre brougham, he took his havana and drove me and a couple of other men back in his phaeton to Kensington in gloomy and grandiose silence. He could not go to Mrs. Delany's, for the best of all reasons, that he was not asked. Ladies never *do* invite with their pet friends the quarry their pet friends are trying the hardest to lure;

not from envy, pretty little dears ! who would think of accusing them of *that* ? Do they ever, by any chance, break the Tenth Commandment, and covet their neighbor's carriage, horses, or appointments, diamonds, point, flirtations, or anything that she has ?

The day after the Trefusis went down to Brighton, to drive the Dragoons distracted, who would see her cantering over the South Downs with some stray acquaintance, who lent her one of his horses, and in return lost his heart to those imperious black eyes ; or waltz with her at one of their own balls, to drink in intoxication with the clang of The Express ; or meet her on the Esplanade, that magnificent face enhanced by her little cobweb lace veil, swaying them all with her grand beauty, as if her little carved ivory parasol handle had been a scepter as potent as Venus's ceinture.

De Vigne stayed in town, and let her go, thank Heaven ! without putting his love, and name, and honor into Constance Trefusis's hands.

PART THE FIFTH.

I.

HOW DE VIGNE COURTS IRON GYVES, AS THOUGH THEY
WERE SOFTEST ROSE CHAINS.

DE VIGNE and I consumed not a little cognac and Caven-
dish, swearing over our durance vile, when everybody, ex-
cept unlucky dogs of militaires, had departed, and town
was empty ; shutters up in all the windows where we had
wont to see delicate hot-house flowers, and as beautiful
English faces ; not a wiggy coachman nor a showy hack in

Ring or Ride; not a lounge by the rails, nor a note of the Life Guards band; the club-rooms empty, newsless, and dreary, great markets of gossip without either scandal-mongers or hearers, a forlorn wight or two sitting in them with the papers all to himself, but far from enjoying the monopoly—everything shut up, everything at a stand-still, even Paterfamilias of Russell Square and Bloomsbury had taken himself off to eat shrimps and admire the “hocean” at Margate; even Brown, Jones, and Robinson had got their fortnight from Coutts’s or Barclay’s, and were gone to shoot sparrows with their country cousins, or to Boulogne, under the impression that they should have “done France;” all the sang pur was gone, and a good deal of the canaille, and we were left in London, I thirsting to be stalking royals with Sabretasche up in his Inverness-shire moor, and De Vigne longing to be after a finer covey still. So, after six weeks’ consummation of anathemas, soda water, and Latakia, sufficient to last a troop for a twelve-month, he and I were delighted enough when we were at last swinging down in the express to Vigne on the 31st of August. I wondered in my mind he was not off to Kemp Town, but I was too glad to find the partridges outbalanced the Trefusis to make any comment upon it. Vigne was about sixty miles from London, and we were at the station in a couple of hours or so, where a drag waited for us with four blood bays, whose grooms glowed with repressed delight at sight of their master. De Vigne, though of somewhat imperious temper, and immeasurably haughty to people of pretentious rank, was cordially liked by his dependents; and I have always noticed that servants always like best those who, while they treat them well, never let them forget their difference of degree. Vigne was a pretty picturesque village, and nearly every rood of land belonged to him; and his park was almost as magnificent a sweep

of land as Holcombe or Longleat. The De Vignes of Vigne went far back in English annals, farther than any in the peerage; and De Vigne would have no more accepted a title than a partnership in a brewery. He looked back on a pure ancestry—ambassadors, scholars, soldiers, chancellors, ministers, gentlemen always; and many a tale of daring and danger, many a record of high honor and chivalric deeds, were told to him as a child of those courtly men in hauberk and corslet, in velvet and point, with their stern brows, and their perfumed love-locks, and their powdered wigs—men who had wooed and won in courts and camps, and made their names famous either through pen or sword.

It was with something warmer than pride that he looked across over his wide woodlands glowing in the August sunset, the great elm-trees throwing their wide cool shadows far over the rich pasture land beneath; the ferns, from the tiny feathery sprays up to the giant leaves, high as a man's elbow, waving in the fresh breezes, the deer trooping away into the deep green glades and the lengthened avenues, stretching off in aisles of burnished green and gold, like one of Creswick's rich English landscapes of checkered light and shadow. A mile and a half of one of those magnificent elm avenues brought us to the house, more like Hardwick Hall in exterior than any other place I know. It stood grandly, too, something as Hardwick does; but in interior, though the hall and other parts of it were medieval enough, it was what Hardwick certainly is not—or was not, when last I saw it—luxurious and modern to the last degree, with every elegance and comfort that upholstery and science have taught the nineteenth century to look upon as absolute requirements.

De Vigne threw the ribbons to a groom, and sprang down, while the deep bay of the dogs in the kennels some way off gave him a welcome to his taste. In the hall he

had another: his mother, Lady Flora, a soft, delicate woman, with eyes and voice of great beauty and sweetness, came out from a morning room to meet him, with both her hands outstretched, and a fond smile on her face. De Vigne loved his mother tenderly and reverentially. She had been a wise woman with him: as a child, she stimulated his energies instead of repressing them, and, with strong self-command, let him risk a broken limb rather than teach him his first idea of fear, a thing of which De Vigne was as profoundly ignorant as little Nelson. As a boy, she entered into all his sports and amusements, listening to his tales of rounders, ponies, cricket, and boating, as if she really understood them. As a man, she never attempted to interfere with him. She knew that she had trained him in honor and truth, and was too skilled in human nature to seek to pry into a young man's life. The consequence was, that she kept all her son's affection, trust, and confidence, and, when she did speak, was always heard gently and respectfully; and he would often tell her as naturally of his errors and entanglements as he had, when a child, told her of his faults to his servant or his Shetland. The house was full, chiefly of men come down for the shooting, with one or two girls of the Ferrers family, Lady Flora's nieces, who would have liked very well to have caught their cousin Granville, for their father, though he was a Marquis, was as poor for a peer as a curate with six daughters and no chance of preferment. But their cousin Granville was not to be caught—by their trolling, at least.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Chevasney," said Lady Flora, when I went down to the drawing-room after ablution and hot coffee. "You know you are always a favorite of mine, at first, *ne vous en déplaît*, because you were a friend of Granville's, and then for your own sake. There

will be some people here to-morrow to amuse you, not but what you gentlemen never seem to me so happy as when you are without us. Shut you up in your smoking, or billiard, or card room, and you want nothing more!"

"True enough!" laughed De Vigne. "It is an ungallant admission, but it is a fact, nevertheless. See men at college wines, in the jollity and merriment of a camp, in the *sans gêne* enjoyment of a man dinner! Deny it who will, we *can* be happy without the *beau sexe*, but the *beau sexe* cannot be happy without us!"

"How conceited you are, Granville!" cried Adelina Ferrers, a handsome blonde, who thought very well of herself. "I am quite sure we can."

"Can you, Lina?" said De Vigne, leaning against the mantle-piece, and watching his mother's diamond rings flash in and out as she did some bead-work. "Why do we never hear of ladies' parties, then? Why, when we come in after dinner, do we invariably find you all bored to the last extent, and half asleep, till you revive under our kindly influence? Why, if you are as happy without us, do we never see you establish women clubs to drink tea, or *eau de Cologne*, or *sal volatile*, and read new novels and talk over dress?"

"Because we are too kind. Our society improves you so much, that, through principle, we do not deprive you of it," answered Lady Lina, with a long glance of her large turquoise eyes.

"That's a pity, dear," smiled De Vigne, "because, if we thought you were comfortably employed, we could go off to the partridges to-morrow with much greater pleasure; whereas, to know, as we do, that you will all be victims of ennui till we come back again, naturally spoils sport to men like myself, of tender conscience and amiable disposition. You have 'The Princess' now in your hand, Lina;

that will tell you how ladies who fancied they could be happy without us came to grief!"

"This is the fruit of Miss Trefusis's flattery, I suppose," sneered Blanche Ferrers, the other cousin, who could not appreciate fun, and who had made hard running after De Vigne a season ago.

"Miss Trefusis never flatters," said De Vigne, quietly.

"Indeed!" said Blanche. "I know nothing of her. I do not desire!"

The volumes expressed in those four last words were such as only women like Blanche Ferrers could possibly compress in one little sneering sentence. De Vigne felt all that was intended in it: his eyebrows contracted, his eyes flashed fire; he had too knightly a heart not to defend an absent woman, and a woman he loved, as dearly as he would his own honor.

"It would be to your advantage, Blanche, if you had that pleasure. Miss Trefusis would make any one proud to know her; *even* the Ladies Ferrers, though the world does say they are fond of imagining the sun created solely that it may have the honor of shining on them."

He spoke very quietly, but sarcastically. His mother looked up at him hastily, then bent over her work; Blanche colored with annoyance, and smiled another sneer.

"Positively, Granville, you are quite chivalrous in her defense. I know it is the law at Vigne for nobody to disagree with you; nevertheless, I shall venture, for I must assure you that, far from esteeming it an honor to know Miss Trefusis, I should deem it rather a—*dishonor*!"

How like a lion fairly roused and longing to spring he looked. He kept cool, however, but his teeth were set hard.

"Lady Blanche, it is rather dishonor to yourself to dare to speak in that manner of a lady of whom you have never

heard any evil, and who is *my* friend. Miss Trefusis is as worthy respect and admiration as yourself, and she shall never be mentioned in any other terms in my presence."

How gallant he looked, with his steady eyes looking sternly down at her, and his firm mouth set into iron. A whole history of love and trust, honor and confidence, the chivalry that defended the absent, the strength that protected the woman dear to him, were written on his face. By Heaven! to think it should all be wasted upon *her*!

Blanche laughed a derisive laugh, but a little timidly, though; it was not easy even for her to be rude to him.

"Respect and admiration! Really, Granville, one would believe report, and imagine you intended to give Lady Fantyre's—what?—niece, dependent, companion—which is it?—your name."

"Perhaps I do. As it is, I exact the same courtesy for her, as my friend, that I shall do if ever she be—my wife!"

He spoke slowly and calmly, still leaning on the mantle-piece; but his face was white with passion, and his dark eyes glowed like fire. What a dead silence followed his words: the silence of breathless astonishment, of unutterable dismay. Lady Flora turned as white as her beadwork, and she did not trust herself to look at her son. In a moment or two she spoke, with the same gentle dignity she always had.

"Blanche, you forget what you are saying. You can have no possible right to question your cousin's actions or opinions. Let this be the last I hear of such a discussion. Mr. Chevasney, if you wish to be useful, will you be kind enough to hold this skein of floss silk for me?"

Just at that moment some of the men came in and surrounded Adelina and Blanche; it was a relief to everybody. Lady Flora went on winding her silk, not daring

to look up at her son. He stayed where he was, leaning on the mantle-piece, playing with a setter's ears, till dinner was announced as served; then he gave his arm to the Marchioness, and was especially brilliant and agreeable all the evening.

That night, however, when most of us had gone off to our dormitories to dream of the joys of stubble and turnip-field, De Vigne rapped at the door of his mother's dressing-room. She expected it, and admitted him at once. He sat by the fire some moments, holding her hand in his own. De Vigne was very gentle with what he loved. His mother looked up at him, with a very few words: "Dearest, is it true?" "Yes." Where he meant much, he also generally said few words.

His mother was silent. Perhaps, until now, she had never realized how entirely she would lose her son to his wife; how entirely the new passion would sweep away and replace the old affection; how wholly, and how justly, his confidences, his ambitions, his griefs, his joys, would go to another instead of to herself; perhaps she knew how entirely unfit De Vigne was to be curbed and tied, how much his fiery nature would shrink from the burden of married life, and his fiery heart refuse to give the love exacted as a right; perhaps she knew, by knowledge of human nature, and experience of human life, how true it is that "a young man married is a man that's marred."

"Your wife!" she said, at last, thick tears in her voice and in her eyes. "Granville, you little guess how those words sound to me; how much I have hoped, how much I have feared, how much I have prayed for in—your wife. Forgive me, dear; I can hardly accustom myself to it yet."

She bent her head, and sobbed bitterly. May we believe, *with Madame de Girardin*—

C'est en vain que l'on nomme erreur,
Cette secrète intelligence,
Qui portant la lumière au fond,
Sur des maux ignorés nous fait gémir d'avance?

De Vigne bent his head, and kissed her. It was very rarely he saw his mother's tears; in proportion to their rarity they always touched him. They were both of them silent. The next question she asked came with the resignation of a woman to a man whose purpose she knows she can never alter, nor even sway, any more than she can stir the elm-trees in the avenues from the beds that they have lain in for such lengthened centuries.

"You really love her then?"

"More passionately than I have ever loved a woman yet."

That sealed the sentence. Lady Flora knew that never in love or in sport had De Vigne checked his fancy or turned back from his quarry.

"God help you then!"

He started at the uncalled-for prayer. It was an involuntary utterance of the deep tenderness, the undefined dread with which she regarded his future. He smiled down at her. "Why, mother, what is there so dreadful in love? One would fancy you thought shockingly of your sex, to view my first thought of marriage through smoked glasses."

She tried to smile. "It is such a lottery."

"Of course it is; but so are all games of chance; and, if one ventures nothing, one may go without play all one's life. As for happiness, *that* is at very uncertain odds at all times, and the only wise thing one can do is to enjoy the present, and let the future go hang. Does not La Bruyère tell us that no man ever married yet, who did not in twelve months' time wish he had never seen his wife?"

It is true enough for that matter; so that, whether one does it sooner or later, one is equally certain to repent." He spoke with a light laugh and a fearless confidence in his own future which went to his mother's heart. She took both his hands in hers.

"Granville, you know I never seek to interfere with your opinions, plans, or actions. You are a man of the world, far fitter to judge for yourself than I am to judge for you; but no one can love you better than I."

"Indeed no," said De Vigne, tenderly, "none so well."

"And no one cares for your future life as I. Therefore, will you listen to me for a minute?"

"Sixty, if you like."

"Then," said his mother gently, "do you really think yourself that you are fitted for married life, or married life fitted for you?"

"Don't put it in that way," said De Vigne, impatiently. "Married life? No, not if I were chained down into dull domesticity; but in our position marriage makes little or no difference. We keep the same society, have the same divertissements. We are not chained together like two galley-slaves, toiling away at one oar, without change of scene or of companion. Constance Trefusis must be my wife, because, if she is not, I shall go mad; but she is not a woman only fit 'to suckle fools and chronicle small beer,' and she would be the last to deprive me of that liberty of which you are quite right in thinking I should chafe incessantly at the loss. But I am talking myself, not listening to you. What else were you going to say?"

"I was going to say—are you sure you will never love again?"

De Vigne grew impatient again. He threw back his head; these were not pleasant suggestions to him.

"Really, my dear mother, you are looking very far into

futurity. How can I, or any other man, by any possibility, answer such a question? We are not gods, to foresee what lies before us. I know that I love now—love more deeply than I have ever done yet, and that is enough for me!”

“That is not enough for me,” answered his mother, with a heavy sigh. “I can foresee your future, for I know your nature, your mind, your heart. You will marry now, in the mad passion of the hour; marry as a thousand men do, giving up their birthright of free choice, and liberty, and an open future, for a mess of porridge of a few months’ delight. I know nothing of Miss Trefusis, nor do I wish to say anything against her; but I know *you*. You marry her, no doubt, from eye-love; for her magnificent beauty, which report says is unrivaled. After a time that beauty will grow stale and tame to you; it will not be your fault; men are born inconstant, and eye-love expires when the eye has dwelt long enough on it to grow tired and satiated. Have you not, times out of number, admired and wearied before, Granville? Then there will come long years of regret, impatience of the fetters once joyfully assumed; perhaps—for you require sympathy and comprehension—miserable years of wrangling and reproaches, such as you are least fitted of all men to endure. You will see that your earlier judgment was crude, your younger taste at fault; *then*, with your passions strengthened, your discernment matured, you will love again—love with all the tenderness, the vehemence, the power of later years—love, to find the crowning sorrow of your life, or to drag another in to share the curse you already have brought upon yourself. Can you look steadily at such a future?”

A chill of ice passed through his veins as he heard her; then he threw the presentiment off, and his hot blood

flowed on again in its willful and fiery course; he answered her passionately and decidedly.

"Yes. I have no fear of any evil coming to me through my love. If she will, she shall be my wife, and whatever my future be I accept it."

The day after I found the reason for De Vigne's throwing over Brighton for his own home. The Trefusis and Lady Fantyre came down to stay at Follet, a place some three or four miles from Vigne, with some friends of the Fantyre's, whose acquaintance she had made on the Continent, people whom De Vigne knew but slightly, but whom he now cultivated more than he generally troubled himself to do much more exclusive members of that invariably proud, stuck-up, and pitiaibly-toadied thing, the county.

The first of September came, gray, soft, still, as that delightful epoch of one's existence always should, and up with the dawn we swallowed beer and coffee, devils and omelettes, and all the agréments of breakfast too hastily to half appreciate them, and went out, a large party; for Sabretasche had come there the night before, and several other men too, to knock the birds over in De Vigne's princely preserves. What magic is there in sport to make us so mad after it? What is the charm that lies hid in the whirr of the covey up from the stubble, and the clear sharp ring of the Purdey, that makes dandies of Pall Mall never so happy as when wading through plowed fields in sloppy weather, and fastidious exclusives warm with boyish verve, carrying their gun through dripping turnips, knee-deep in mud, or dead beat but triumphant with the knowledge of twenty brace in the bag on the pony's back? A strange charm there is—a charm we enjoy too much to analyze it; and De Vigne, whose head and heart were full of different game, and Sabretasche, who hated dirtying his hands, and shrank from most people and most things as too coarse for

his artistic taste, alike enjoyed it with the dogs and the beaters round them in the wide open fields, or lying in the shade of some great hedge-trees, discussing Bass and a hot luncheon with more appetite than they ever had for the most delicious bouquet of claret or the daintiest hors d'œuvre at Tortini's.

A splendid day's sport we had; and though De Vigne did not allow a battue on his lands, I think we had almost as many head of game in the bags as if we had had one, when twilight had put an end to the ever-glorious and ever-longingly-anticipated First, and we had returned to our cozy rooms in the bachelor's wing to dress for dinner. Coming out of mine I met De Vigne, looking not one bit more tired than if he had been lying all day on a sofa in the drawing-room, dressed with the quiet taste that characterized him. De Vigne detested Brummelism or fopism of any species, yet I bet you he looked as thorough-bred with his plain, delicate linen, and his little ribbon tie, as his ancestors used in velvet and cloth of gold, steinkirks of point and shoe-buckles of diamonds. He put his hand on my shoulder with his old kind smile.

"Well, Arthur, hadn't we good sport to-day? I say, send off any of that game you like anywhere; you know lots of people, I dare say. Isn't it beautiful to see Sabretasche knock down the birds, for such a lazy fellow as he is, too?"

"He doesn't shoot better than you."

"Don't you think so? But then he's a disciple of the dolce, and I always go hard at anything I take in hand, not but what I am idle enough, in all conscience, sometimes."

"You don't sell your game?" I asked, knowing I might just as well ask him if he sold hot potatoes.

"Sell it? No, thank you. I am not a poulterer. I

have sport, not trade; and the men who sell the game their friends help them to kill should write up over their lodge-gates, 'Game sold here by men who would like to be thought gentlemen, but find it a losing concern.' I would as soon send my trees up to London for building purposes as my partridges to Leadenhall. The fellows who do that must have some leaven of old Lombards, or Chepe goldsmiths in them; and though they have an escutcheon instead of a sign now, can't get rid of the trader's instinct."

I loved to set De Vigne up on his aristocratic stilts, they were so deliciously contradictory to the radical opinions he was so fond of enunciating occasionally. The fact was, he was an aristocrat at his heart, a radical by his head, and the two sometimes had a tilt and upset one another.

"Is anybody coming to dinner to-day?" I was half afraid somebody was whom I detested to see near him at all.

"Yes," he answered, curtly. "There are the Levisons, Lady Fantyre and Miss Trefusis, Jack Cavendish, and Ashton of Boxwood."

For my life I couldn't help a long whistle, I was so savage at that woman getting the better of us all so cleverly.

"The deuce! De Vigne, your mother and that nasty, gambling, story-telling old Fantyre will hardly run in couples."

For a second his cheek flushed.

"It is *my* house, I invite whom I see fit. As for my mother, God bless her! she will hardly ever find a woman good or true enough to run in couples with her. She is *too* good and true to be prudish or censorious. I have always noticed that it is women who live in glass houses who learn quickest to throw stones, I suppose in the *futile* hope of inducing people to imagine that their

dwellings are of spotless stone, such as nobody could possibly assail."

"Why the devil, De Vigne," said I, "are you so mad about that woman? What is it you admire in her?"

He answered with the reckless passion that was day by day getting more mastery over him.

"How should I define? I admire nothing—I admire everything. I only know that I will move heaven and earth to win her, and that I would shoot any man dead who ventured to dispute her with me!"

"Is she worth all that?"

His eyes grew cold and annoyed; I had gone a step too far. He took his hand off my shoulder, and saying, with that icy hauteur which no man could assume so chillingly as himself, "My dear Chevasney, you may apply the lesson I gave Lady Blanche yesterday, to yourself; I never allow, either to me or of me, any remarks on my personal concerns," passed down before me into the hall, where, just alighted from the Levisons' carriage, her cerise-hued cloak dropped off one shoulder, something shining and jeweled wreathed over her hair, the strong wax-lights gleaming on her face, with its rich geranium-hue in the cheek, and its large, black, luminous eye, and its short, curved, upper lip, stood in relief against the carved oak, dark armor, and deep-hued windows of the hall—the Trefusis.

How grandly De Vigne went down the wide oak staircase and across the tessellated pavement to her side, to welcome her to Vigne—how tenderly he bent toward her—how passionately he looked down into her upraised face, and she—she thought, I dare say, as she glanced round, that it would be a conquest worth making: the master and—the home.

Lady Flora looked earnestly at Constance as she entered. It was the first time she had seen her, for the Trefusis was

out driving when, by her son's request, she called on the Levisons, with whom she had not more acquaintance than an occasional dinner or recontre at some county gathering.

Splendid as Constance looked—and that she was magnificent her worst enemies could never deny—in that hard though superb profile, in those lips curved downward though of such voluptuous beauty, in those eyes so relentless and defiant though of such perfect hue and shape, his mother found how little to hope, how much to fear!

Yet the Trefusis played her cards well. She was very gentle, very sweet, to Lady Flora. She did not seem to seek De Vigne, nor to try and monopolize him; and with the Ladies Ferrers she was so calm, so self-possessed, and yet had so little assumption, that, hard as Lina and Blanche were studying to pick her to pieces, they could not find where to begin, till she drew off her glove at dinner, when Blanche whispered to Sabretasche, who had taken her in, "No sang pur *there*, but plenty of almond paste;" to which the Colonel, hating the Trefusis, but liking De Vigne too well to give the Ferrers a handle against their possible future cousin, replied, "Well, Lady Blanche, perhaps so—but one is so sated with pretty hands and empty heads, that one is almost grateful for a change."

Whereat Blanche, all her governesses, Paris schools, and finishing not having succeeded in drilling much understanding into her brain, was bitterly wrathful, and, en conséquence, smiled extra pleasantly.

The Trefusis acted her part admirably that night, and people less skilled in society and physiognomy than Lady Flora would have been blinded by it.

"What a master spirit of intrigue is that woman!" said Sabretasche to me, as he watched De Vigne leaning over Constance's chair, while the Ferrers sang bravuras that excruciated the Colonel's fastidious aural senses. "Yet

she is not a talented woman by any means. But no man—certainly no man in love with her—can stand against the strong will and skillful artifices of an ambitious and designing intrigante. Solomon tells you, you know, Arthur, that the worst enemy you young fellows have is woman, and I tell you the same.”

“Yet, if report speaks truly, the sex has no warmer votary than you?”

“Whenever *did* report speak truly? Perhaps I may be only revenging myself; how should you know? It is the fashion, I know, to look on Pamela as a fallen star, and on Lovelace as a horrid cruel wretch. I don’t see it always so myself. Stars that are dragged from heaven by the very material magnets of guineas, cashmeres, love of dress, avarice, or ambition for a St. John’s-wood villa, are not deeply to be pitied; and men who buy toys at such low prices are not utterly to be censured for not estimating their goods very high. The price of a virtuous woman is not often above rubies; it has this difference, that the rubies set as a bracelet will suffice for Coralie, while they must go round a coronet to win Lady Blanche. Apropos of Blanche, whatever other silly things you do, Chevasney, never make an early marriage.”

“I never intend, I assure you,” I said, tartly. I thought he might have heard of Gwendolina, and be poking fun at me; and Gwen, I knew, was not for me, but for M. le Duc de Vieillecour, a poor, wiry, effete old beau, who had been about Charles X.

“Very well, so far; but you need not look so indignant; no man can tell into what he may be drawn. No one is so secure but what next year he may have committed the sin or the folly he utterly condemns or ridicules now. Look at De Vigne; six months past he would have laughed in your face if you had spoken to him of marriage.

Now he would be tempted to knock you down if you attempted to dissuade him from marriage. What will he gain by it? What will he not lose? If she were a nice girl, he would lose his liberty, his pleasant *vie de garçon*, his power of disposing of himself how and where he list, and of doing what he chose, without query or comment. With a woman like the Trefusis he will lose still more; he will lose his peace, his self-respect, his belief in human nature, and it will be well if he lose not his honor. He will have always beside him one from whom his better taste revolts, but to whom his hot-headed youth has fettered him, till one or the other lies in the grave. There is no knowing to what madness or what misery his early marriage may not lead him, to what depths of hopelessness or error the iron fetters of the Church and law may not drag him. Were he a weak man, he would collapse under her strong rein, and be henpecked, cheated, and cajoled; being a strong-willed one, he will rebel, and, still acting and seeing for himself, will find out in too short a time that he has sacrificed himself, and life, and name, to—a mistake!"

He spoke very earnestly for listless, careless, nonchalant, indolent Sabretasche, and his eyes grew inexpressibly melancholy with the utterance of his prophecy. I stared at him, for he was almost proverbially impassive; he caught my eye, and laughed.

"What do you think of my sermon, Arthur? Bear it in mind if you are in danger, that is all. When will those girls have finished those interminable songs? What a cruelty it is to society at large to have Scapper and Garcia teach women to sing whether they happen to have a note in their voice or not! Will you come out into the card-room, and have a game or two at *écarté*? You play wonderfully well for one so young as you are, but then you say a Frenchman taught you. I hate to play with a man

who cannot beat me tolerably often; there is no excitement without difficulty. The Trefusis knows that. Look at her flirting with Monckton in her stately style, while De Vigne stands by, looks superbly indifferent, and chafes all the time like a hound held in leash while another dog is pulling down the stag!"

"She will not make you happy, Granville!" said his mother that night, when he bid her good night in her dressing-room, as was his invariable custom.

He answered her stiffly. "It is unfortunate you are all so prejudiced against her."

"I am not prejudiced," she answered, with a bitter sigh. "Heaven knows how willingly I would try to love anything that loves you, but a woman's intuition sees farther sometimes than a man's discernment can penetrate, and in Miss Trefusis, beyond beauty of form and feature, I see nothing that will satisfy you, Granville; there is no beauty of mind, no beauty of heart! The impression she gives me is, that she is an able schemer, a clever actress, able to seize on the weak points of those around her and turn them to her own advantage, but that she is illiterate, ambitious, and heartless!"

"You wrong her and you wrong yourself!" broke in De Vigne, passionately. "Your anxiety for me warps alike your justice to her and your own penetration and charity of feeling. I should have thought you above such injustice and pettinesses."

"I only wish I may do her injustice," answered his mother, gravely. "But oh, Granville, I fear—I fear! Dearest, do not be angry, none will ever love you more unselfishly than I! If I tremble for your future, it is only that I know your character so well. I know all that, as years go on, your mind will require, your heart exact, from the woman who is your wife. I know how quickly

the glamour fades in the test of constant intercourse; I know that your wife will need to have wit, talent, fascination, in a very uncommon degree to keep you faithful to her; she will need to give you unusually passionate and lavish affection to chain your wayward heart. A commonplace, domestic woman would drive you from her side to another's; a hard, tyrannous, beautiful woman will freeze you into ice, like herself. I, who love you so dearly, how can I look calmly on to see the shipwreck of your life? My darling! my darling! I would almost as soon hear that you had died on a battle-field, as your father did before you, as hear that you had given your fate into that woman's hands!"

His mother's tenderness and grief touched De Vigne deeply; he knew how well she loved him, and that this was the first time she had sought to cross his will, but he stooped and kissed her, with fond words, and rose—of the same persuasion still. It were as easy to turn the west wind from its course, as it sweeps wild and free over the sea and land, as by words or counsel, laws or warnings, to attempt to stem the self-willed, headlong current of a man's strong love.

Had any whispered warning to Acis of his fate, would he have ever listened or cared when, in the golden sunset glow, he saw the witching gleam of Galatea's golden hair? When the son of Myrha gazed up into the divine eyes, and felt his own lips glow at the touch of "lava kisses," could he ever foresee, or, had he foreseen, would he have ever heeded the dark hour when he should lie dying on those same Idalian shores?

The Trefusis played her cards ably. A few days after she played her ace of trumps, and her opponents were obliged to throw up their hands. De Vigne did not ask his mother to invite her and Lady Fantyre there; infatuated

though he was, and wisely careless on such subjects generally, I think he felt that the old *ci-devant* orange-girl, with her nasty stories, her dingy reputation, and her clever tricks with the four honors, was not a guest suitable to his high-born, high-bred mother, so thorough a lady in tone and manner, voice and mind. But a day or two after was De Vigne's twenty-sixth birthday, a day that—contrary to his own taste, but in accordance with old habit, from the time when butts of beer brewed at his birth and pipes of comet wine laid down by his grandfather, had flowed for his tenants and guests on his majority—had been celebrated, whether he was present or not, with wonderful *éclat* and magnificence. This year, as usual, "the county," and parts of surrounding counties, too, came to a dinner and ball at Vigne; the Levisons had been included in the invitations a month before we went down, and now, of course, the Trefusis would accompany them.

As De Vigne had not even the slight admixture of Roger De Coverley benevolence and Squire Western rough patriarchy assumed by some county men at the present time, as he had not the slightest taste for oats or barley, did not care two straws how his farms went or how his lands were let, and hated toadying and flummery as cordially as he hated bad wine, the proceedings of the day very naturally bored him immensely, and he threw himself down, after replying to his tenants' speeches, in one of the delicious couches of the smoking-room, with an anathema on the whole thing.

"What a happy fellow you are, Sabretasche," said he to the Colonel, who had retired from the scene on to one of the sofas, with a pile of periodicals and a case of exquisite Manillas. "You have nothing on your hands but your town-house, that you can shut up, and your Highland lodge, where you can leave your dogs and servants for

ten months in the year, and have no yeomanry tenants and servants to look to you yearly for sirloins and October, and a speech that is more trouble to make than fifty parliamentary ones."

"Yes, my dear fellow," said Sabretasche, "I did stay in that tent pitying you beyond measure, till my feelings and my olfactory and aural nerves couldn't stand seeing you martyred, and scenting that very excellent beef, and hearing those very edifying cheers any longer; so, as I couldn't help *you*, I took compassion on myself, shut myself up with the magazines, and thanked Heaven I was not born to that desideratum—'a fine landed property!'"

De Vigne laughed.

"Well, it's over now. I shouldn't mind it so much if they wouldn't talk such bosh to one's face—praising me for my liberality and noble-mindedness, and calling me public-spirited and generous, and Heaven knows what. They're a good-hearted set of fellows, though, I believe."

"Possibly," said Sabretasche; "but what extent of good-heartedness can make up for those dreadfully broad o's and a's, and those terrific 'Sunday-going suits,' and those stubble-like heads of hair plastered down with oil bought at a chemist's?"

"Not to you, you confounded refiner of refined gold," laughed De Vigne. "By-the-by, Sabretasche, don't you sometimes paint lilies in your studio? That raffiné operation would suit you to a T. I suppose you never made love to a woman who was not the ultra-essence of good-breeding and Grecian outline?"

Sabretasche gave a sort of shudder; whether at some recollection, or at the simple suggestion, I must leave.

"No! as they say in the 'Peau de Chagrin,' *'je ne conçois pas l'amour dans la misère; une femme fût-elle attrayante autant que la belle Hélène, la Galatée d'Homère,*

n'a plus aucun pouvoir sur mes sens pour peu qu'elle soit crottée.' I never did understand adoring barmaids and worshipping cooks; the vernacular does for me."

"Well, chacun à son goût," said De Vigne; "Cupid has a vernacular of his own which levels rank sometimes. According to some men a pretty face is a pretty face whether it is under a Paris bonnet or a cottage straw. But what I dislike so in this sort of affair is the false light in which it makes one stand. Here am I, who don't see Vigne for nine months out of the year, sometimes not at all, who delegate all the bother of it to my steward, who neither know nor care when the rents are paid, nor how the lands are divided, cheered by these people as if I were a sort of god and king over them—and they mean it, too. Their fathers' fathers worshiped my fathers' fathers, and so they, in a more modern fashion, cheer, and toast, and fête me as if I were a combined Cincinnatus and Titus, who live only for the welfare of my people, and go to bed dissatisfied if I can't count up the good deeds I have done in the past day. You know well enough I am nothing of the kind. I don't think I have a spark of benevolence in my composition. I could no more get up an interest in model cottages and prize fruit than I could in Cochin-Chinas or worsted work, and the consequence is that I feel a hypocrite, and instead of returning thanks to-day to my big farmers and my small retainers, I should have liked to have said to them, 'My good fellows, you are utterly mistaken in your man. I am glad you are all doing well, and I won't let any of you be ground down if I know it, but otherwise I don't care a jot about you, and this annual affair is a very great bore to me, whatever it may be to you; and I take this opportunity of assuring you that, far from being a demigod, I am a very graceless cavalry man, and instead of doing any good with my forty thousand a year,

I only make ducks and drakes of it as fast as I possibly can.' If I had said that to them I should have relieved myself, had no more toadying, and felt that the Vigneites and I understood one another. What a horrid bother it is one can't tell truth in the world!"

"Most people find the bother lie in having to tell the truth occasionally," said the Colonel, with his enigmatical smile. "You might enjoy having, like Fénelon's happy islanders, only to open your eyes to let your thoughts be read, but I am afraid such an exposé would hardly suit most of us. You don't agree with Talleyrand, that language is given us to conceal our thoughts."

De Vigne looked at him as he poked up his pipe.

"Devil take you, Sabretasche! Who is to know what you mean, or what you think, or what you are?"

"My dear fellow," said the Colonel, cutting the *Westminster* slowly with one hand, and taking out his cigar with the other, "nobody, I hope, for I agree with Talleyrand if you don't."

The County came—a few to dinner, many to the ball, presenting all the varied forms of that peculiar little oligarchy; a duke, two marquises, two earls, four or five barons, high-dried, grand old dowagers, with fresh, pretty-looking daughters as ready for fun and flirtation as their maids; stiltified county queens, with daughters long on hand, who had taken refuge in High-Churching their village, and starched themselves very stiff in the operation; pretty married women, who waltzed in a nutshell, and had many more of us after them than the girls; county beauties, accustomed to carry all before them at race balls if not at Almack's, and to be empresses at archery fêtes if they were only units in Belgravita; hunting baronets, who liked the music of the pack when they throw up their heads much better than the music of D'Albert's waltzes; members with

the down hardly on their cheeks; other members, whose mission seemed much more in the saddle than the benches; rectors by the dozen, who found a village dance on the green sinful, but a ball at Vigne a very pardonable error; scores of military men, who flirted more desperately and meant less by it than any fellows in the room; all the county, in fact, and among them little old Fantyre, with her hooked nose, and her queer reputation, her dirty, priceless lace, and her jewels got nobody knew how, and whether her daughter, niece, protégée, companion, the inconnue, the intrigante, the interloper, but decidedly the belle, hard, handsome, haughty Constance Trefusis. Magnificent she looked in some geranium-hued dress, as light and brilliant as summer clouds, with the rose tint of sunset on them, and large white water-lilies in her massive raven hair, turned back à l'impératrice off her low brow, under which her eyes shot such dangerous Parthian glances. One could hardly wonder that De Vigne offended past redemption the Duchess of Mangoldwurzel, ruined himself for life with his aunt, the Marchioness of Marqueterie, annoyed beyond hope of pardon the Countess of Ormolu, the five baronesses, all the ladies in their own right, all the great heir-esses, all the county princesses-royal, all the archery-party beauties, and, careless of rank, right, or comment, opened the ball with—the Trefusis. It was her triumph par excellence, and she knew it. She knew enough of De Vigne to know that what he dared to begin he would dare to follow out, and that the more animadversion he provoked, the more certainly would he persevere in his own will.

“We have lost the game!” said Sabretasche to me, as he passed me, waltzing with Adelina Ferrers.

It was true. De Vigne waltzed that same waltz with Constance Trefusis; I can see him as if it were last evening, whirling her round, the white lilies of her bouquet de cor-

sage crushed against his breast, her forehead resting on his shoulder, his moustaches touching her hair as he whispered in her ear, his face glad, proud, eager, impassioned; while the county feminines sneered, and whispered behind their fans, what could De Vigne possibly see in that woman? and the men swore what a deuced fine creature she was, and wondered what Trefusis she might be.

And that waltz over, De Vigne gave her his arm and led her out of the ball-room to take some ice, and, when the ice was disposed of, strolled on with her into the conservatories—those matchless conservatories, thanks to Lady Flora, brilliant as the glories of the tropics, and odorous as a rich Indian night, with the fragrance exhaling from citron and cypress groves, and the heavy clusters of magnolias and mangoes. There, in that atmosphere, that hour, so suited to banish prudence and fan the fires of passion—there, to the woman beside him, glorious as one of the West Indian flowers above their heads, but chill and unmoved at heart as one of their brilliant and waxen petals—De Vigne poured out in terse and glowing words the love that she had so madly and strangely awakened, laying generously and trustfully, as knight of old laid his spoils and his life at his queen's feet, his home, his name, his honor before Constance Trefusis. She simulated tenderness to perfection; she threw it into her lustrous eyes, she forced it into her blushing cheek, it trembled in her softened voice, it glanced upward under her tinted lashes. It was all a lie, but a lie marvelously well acted; and when De Vigne bent over her, covering her lips with passionate caresses, drinking in with every breath a fresh draught of intoxication, his heart beating loud and quick with the triumph of success, was it a marvel that De Vigne forgot his past, his future, his own experience, others' warnings, anything and everything, save the Present, in its full and triumphant delirium?

PART THE SIXTH.

I.

SOME OF THE COLONEL'S PHILOSOPHY.

"I SAY, Arthur—she has outwitted us!"

"The devil she has, Colonel!"

"Who would have believed him so mad?"

"Who would have believed her so artful?"

"Chevasney, men are great fools."

"And women wonderful actresses, Colonel."

"Right; but it is a cursed pity."

"That De Vigne is taken in, or that women are embodied lies, sir—which?"

"Both."

And with his equanimity most unusually ruffled, and his nonchalant impassiveness strangely disturbed, Sabretasche turned away out of the ball-room which De Vigne and the Trefusis, after a prolonged absence, had just re-entered, his face saying plainly enough that Constance was won; hers telling as clearly that Vigne and its master were caught.

When the dawn was rising brightly over the tall elm-trees, and the great iron gates had closed after the last carriage-wheels, De Vigne was talking to his mother in her dressing-room. He wished to tell, yet he shrank from paining her—it came out with a jerk at last—"My mother, wish me joy! I have won her, and *I* have no fear!"

How often she remembered him as he stood there in the full light; with so much youth and trust in his face, so much joy and passion in his eyes, such a clear, happy ring in his voice! When she fully realized his words, she burst

into an agony of tears, the most bitter she had ever shed for him; for whatever in his whole life De Vigne's faults might be to others, in his conduct to his mother he had none. He let her tears have their way; he hardly knew how to console her; he only put his arm gently round her as if to assure her that no wife should ever come between her and him. When she raised her head, she was deathly pale—pale as if the whole of his future hung a dead and hopeless weight upon her. She said no more against it; it was done, and she was both too wise and loved him too truly to vex and chafe him with useless opposition. But she threw her arms round him, and kissed him, long and breathlessly, as she had kissed him in his child's cot long ago, thinking of his father lying dead on the Indian shore with the colors for his shroud.

"My darling! my darling! God bless you! God give you a happy future, and a wife that will love you, as you can love—will love!"

That passionate broken prayer was all his mother ever said to him of his marriage. But when De Vigne, in all the happy spirits and high exultation of his successful passion, was riding and driving with his fiancée, or knocking down the birds in the open, or waltzing with the Trefusis, and lingering in delicious tête-à-têtes where the hours slipped away uncounted, or laughing and jesting with us, when the ladies were gone, in the luxurious *laissez-aller* of the smoking-room, I doubt not his mother spent many a bitter hour weeping over that future which the prescience of affection only too truly revealed to her.

De Vigne received few congratulations; but that sort of thing was quite contrary to his taste, and I think he was far too full of delirious success to notice the omission, or to resent his aunt's chill hauteur, or his cousins' sneering innuendoes; on more opposition none of his relatives, not

even the overbearing and knock-me-down Marchioness of Marqueterie, who gave the law to everybody, dared to venture. She only expressed her opinion by ordering her own carriage for the hour and the day in which the Trefusis came for the first time to stay at Vigne. Sabretasche never opened his lips on the subject to De Vigne, or anybody else; but De Vigne, never at any time a tenacious or quickly-irritated man, was too much attached to the Colonel, who had almost as great a fascination for one sex as for the other, to take exception at his silence, and was, indeed, too well content with his venture to care or inquire what everybody else thought of it. Lady Flora treated the Trefusis with a generous courtesy, that did its best to grow into something warmer, and watched her with a wistful anxiety that was very touching; but it was evident to every one that, though Constance was most carefully attentive, reverential, and gentle to De Vigne's mother, repressing everything in herself, or in Lady Fantyre, that could in the slightest degree shock or wound her refined and highly cultivated taste, she and Lady Flora could never assimilate, or even approach; that careful courtesy was all that would ever link them together, and that in this instance at least, the extremes did *not* touch.

However, for the three weeks longer that I remained there, on the surface all went on remarkably smooth. The Ferrers, of course, had left with their mother. The Trefusis, as I have said, was irreproachable in style, showed no undue pride and exultation in her triumph, and would have had you believe that she only existed to ministrate to the happiness of De Vigne. Sabretasche was infinitely too polished a gentleman to show disapproval of what he had no earthly business with, and limited himself to an occasional satiric remark on the Trefusis, so veiled in subtle wit and courtesy, that, shrewd as she was, she felt the sting, but

could not find the point of attack clearly enough to return it. De Vigne, of course, saw everything *couleur de rose*, poor old fellow! and only chafed with impatience at the probation of an engagement which the Trefusis, having custom, the world, and her trousseau in her eye, would not allow to end before Christmas, (I think she rather enjoyed fretting and irritating him with denial and delay;) and his mother resigned herself to the inevitable, and did her very best, poor lady! to find out some trace of that beauty of heart, thought, and mind, which her delicate feminine instinct had told her was wanting in the magnificent personal gifts with which nature had enriched the woman who was to be De Vigne's wife.

So all went harmoniously on at Vigne throughout that autumn; and the Mangoldwurzel family, and the House of Ormolu, and all the rest of the County, talked themselves hoarse, speculating on the union of Granville de Vigne, one of the best matches, and one of the proudest names in England, and an unknown, *sans rank*, prestige, history, or anything to entitle her to such an honor, in whom, whether she were daughter, niece, protégée, or companion of that disreputable old woman, Sarah Lady Fantyre, society could decide nothing for certain, nor make out anything at all satisfactory. No wonder the County were up at arms, and hardly knew which to censure the most—De Vigne for daring to make such a *mésalliance*, or the Trefusis for daring to accept it.

"If I ever took the trouble (which I don't, because hate is an exhausting and silly thing) to hate anybody, it would be that remarkably handsome and remarkably detestable woman," said Sabretasche, as he wrapped a plaid round his knees on the box of the drag that was to convey him, and me from Vigne to the station, to take the train for Northamptonshire, in which county, well beloved of every

Englishman for the mere name of Pytchley, Sabretasche was going down for the five weeks that still remained of his leave, and had invited me to accompany him.

As he whispered this adverse sentiment, I turned to look at her as we drove down the avenue. She was dressed (why do I never think of that woman without recollecting her dress? was it because she owed so much to it?) en amazone, for her saddle-horse was being led up and down, with De Vigne's. She leant on De Vigne's arm, the tight dark jacket setting off to perfection the magnificent outlines of her matchless figure, and her black wide-awake, with its few cock's feathers, not shading one iota of her severe aquiline profile. She waved us a gracious farewell with her little riding switch, and he—God bless him!—shouted out at last "Good-by, old fellows!" We left them standing under the brown elm boughs: she looking round the wide expanse of park and woodlands that would soon be hers, he gazing down upon the glorious face and form that would soon be his, the noon radiance of the October sunshine falling full upon them, and on the mullion windows and fantastic corbels and grand outline of the old house beyond them. Then the bays dashed down the avenue, scattering the loose gravel upon either side, the drag rolled past the lodge, the iron gates swung to with a loud clang, and I saw De Vigne and Constance Trefusis no more till their marriage-day.

I went into Northamptonshire, to a box the Colonel had taken from a friend of his, who, being suddenly called to the Cape, had to leave it unoccupied, and enjoyed myself uncommonly there, hunting with that most slap-up of packs, and managing more than once to be in at the finish, by dint of following that best of mottoes, for which we are indebted to the best master of hounds that ever rode to cover, "Throw your heart over, and your horse will fol-

low." I had wonderfully good fun there in that pretty county, consecrated to fox-hunting and apple-trees, view halloo and cider, for in every part of England Sabretasche had hosts of friends, and where he went there was certain to be gathered the best fellows, the best wits, and the best wine anywhere about. Each day I spent with him I grew, without knowing it, more and more attached to the Colonel; the more I saw of him in his own house, so perfect a gentleman, so perfect a host, the longer I listened to his easy, playful talk on men and things, his subtle and profound satire on hypocrisies and follies. It was impossible not to get, as ladies say, fond of Sabretasche; his courtly urbanity, his graceful generosity, his countless accomplishments, his ready wit, all made him so charming a companion, though of the real man it was difficult, as De Vigne said, to judge, through the nonchalance, indolence, impassiveness, with which the Colonel chose to veil all that he said or did. He might have had some secret or other in his past life, or his present career, which no man ever knew; he might be only, what he said he was, an idler, a trifler, a dilettante, a blasé and tired man of the world, a nil admirari-ist. Nobody could tell. Only this I could see after a long time, gay, careless, indolent as he was, that in spite of the refined selfishness, the exquisite epicureanism, the light-heartedness, and the luxurious enjoyment of life that his friends and foes attributed to him, Vivian Sabretasche, like most of the world's merry-makers, was sometimes sad enough at heart.

"Friends? I don't believe in friends, my dear boy," said the Colonel, one night when we sat over the fire discussing olives and claret and Latakia at our ease, after a long run with the Pytchley, a splendid burst over the country, and fifteen minutes alone with the hounds. "Live as long as I—which is twice the term by experience that it

is by years—and you will have learnt to take those mythical individuals at their value. I have scores of friends who come, and are particularly kind to me, when they want something out of me. I have cousins who quite idolize me if they wish for a commission for their son, or a presentation at court. I have an Orestes and Iolaüs and Pylades in every quarter when I am wanted to ballot for them at White's or the Travelers', or give them introductions at Vienna or Rome, or push them through into London society. There are hundreds of good fellows who like Vivian Sabretasche, and run after him because he amuses them, and is a little of the fashion, and is held a good judge of their wine, and their stud, and their pictures. But let Vivian Sabretasche come to grief to-morrow, let his Lares go to the Jews, and his Penates to the devil; let the clubs, instead of quoting, black-ball him, and the *Court Circular*, instead of putting him in the Fashionable Intelligence, cite him among the Criminal Cases, and lament how Lucifer, son of the morning, is fallen, which of his bosom friends will be so anxious then to take his arm down St. James's Street? which of them all will fêter and invite and flatter him? Will Orestes then send him such haunches of venison? Will Iolaüs uncork his comet wine for him, and Pylades stretch out his hand to him, and pick his fallen pride out of the dirt of the gutter, and fight his battle for him when he has crippled himself? Pshaw! my dear Arthur, I take men at my valuation, not at their own. Don't you know—

Si vous êtes dans la détresse,
O mes amis, cachez-le bien,
Car l'homme est bon et s'intéresse
A ceux qui n'ont besoin de rien!"

"It is a sad doctrine, Colonel," said I, who was a boy then, and wished to disbelieve him.

He laughed a little. "Sad? Oh, I don't see that. The first awakening to it may be, is, to many a young fellow beginning life with the fancies and hopes of youth; but nothing in life is worth calling sad. According to Heraclitus, everything is sad; according to Democritus, nothing is sad. The true secret is to take things as they come, and not trouble yourself sufficiently about anything to give it power to trouble you. Enjoy your youth. Take mine and Ovid's counsel—

Utendum est ætate. Cito pede labitur ætas. . . .
Hac mihi de spina grata corona data est."

"But how's one to keep clear of the thorns?"

"By flying, butterfly-like, from rose to rose, and handling it so delicately as not to give it time to prick you. Love makes a poetic and unphilosophic man, like Dante or Petrarch, unhappy; but do you suppose that Lauzun, Grammont, the Duc de Richelieu, were ever made unhappy by love? No; the very idea makes one laugh; the poets took it au sérieux, and suffered in consequence; the courtiers only made it their pastime par excellence, and enjoyed it proportionately. It all depends on the way one lays hold of the roses of life; some men only enjoy the dew and fragrance of the flower, others mismanage it somehow, and get only the thorns."

"You've the secret, then, Colonel," said I, laughing, "for you get a whole conservatory of the most delicious roses under the sun, and not a thorn, I'd bet, among them all."

"Or, at all events, my skin is hard enough not to be pricked by them," smiled Sabretasche. "I think many men begin life like the sand on the top of a drum, obeying every undulation of the air from the notes of a violin near; they are sensitive and susceptible, shrinking at wrong or

injury, easily moved, quickly touched. As years go on, the same men are like the same sand when it has been pressed, and hardened, and burnt in fusion heat, and exposed to chill frosty air, and made into polished, impenetrable glass, on which you can make no impression, off whose icy surface everything glides away, and which it is impossible to cut with the hardest and keenest of knives. The sand is the same sand; it is the treatment it has met with that has changed it. How I do prose to you, Arthur; and of all ills the one a man has least right to inflict on another is his own theories or ideas. Fill your glass, my boy, and pass me those macaroons. How can those poor creatures live who don't know of the Marcobrunnen and macaroons of existence? It is a good thing to have money, isn't it? It not only buys us friends, but it buys us what is of infinitely more value—all the pleasant little agréments of life. I would not keep in the world at all if I did not lie on rose-leaves."

Wherewith the Colonel nestled himself more comfortably into his delicious arm-chair, laid his head on the velvet cushions, closed his eyes, and smoked away at his perfumed hookah, full of the most fragrant and delicate scented tobacco. My short clay was, I believe, an abomination to his senses, which courtesy alone induced him to tolerate. Sardanapalus himself, or the most exquisitely fastidious Pompeian or Greek, might have come to live with Sabretasche in a state of the greatest gratification, though he did dwell in the "Barbarian Isle."

II.

HOW THE MAN MAKES HIS OWN DESTINY, AND THE PATTE
DE VELOURS STRIKES ITS MOST CRUEL WOUND.

ON the 31st of December, Sabretasche and De Vigne, Curly and I (Curly had got his commission in the Coldstreams, and was the prettiest, daintiest, most flattered, and most flirted with young Guardsman of his time) went down by the express, through the snow-whitened fields and hedges, to Vigne, where, contrary to custom, its master was to take his bride on the first morning of the New Year. It was to be a very gay wedding, of course. De Vigne, always liberal to excess, now perfectly lavish in his gifts, had, with the delicacy of warm feeling, followed the French fashion, he said, and given her a corbeille fit for a princess of blood royal, which the Trefusis, having no delicacy of appropriation, accepted as a right. There were to be twelve bridesmaids, not the quite exclusive and ultra high-bred young ladies that would have followed Adelina or Blanche Ferrers, but still very stylish-looking girls, acquaintances of the Trefusis. There was to be such a breakfast and such rejoicings as had never before been seen even at that proverbially magnificent place, where everything was ever done en grand seigneur. Such a wedding was entirely contrary to De Vigne's taste and ideas, but the more others had chosen to run down the Trefusis, the more did he, in his knightly heart, delight to honor her, and therefore had he asked pretty well everybody he knew, and everybody went; for all who knew him liked and wished him well, except his aunt, the Marchioness of Marqueterie, and, par conséquent, the Ladies Ferrers. *They* went, because else the world might have said that they were disappointed Granville

had not married Blanche; but very far from wishing him well, I think they fervently hoped he would repent his hasty step in sackcloth and ashes, and their costly wedding presents were very like Judas's kisses. Wedding presents singularly often are. As she writes the delicate mauve-tinted congratulatory note, wishing dearest Adeliza every joy that earth can give, and assuring her she is the very beau ideal of a perfect wife, is not Madame ten to one saying to her elder daughter, "How strange it is that Fitz should have been taken in—such a bold, flirty girl, and nothing pretty in her, to my taste?" And as we shake Fitz's hand at our club, telling him he is the luckiest dog going to have such a pretty girl, and such a lot of tin by one coup, are we not fifty to one thinking, "Poor devil! he's glad of the tin, I suppose, to keep him out of the Queen's Bench? But, by George! though I *am* hard up, I wouldn't take one of those confounded Peyton women if I knew it? Won't she just check him nicely with her check-book and her consols!"

Whether the congratulations were sincere or not, De Vigne never troubled his head. He had a very happy and sensible indifference to the "*qu'en dira-t'on?*" and he was infinitely too much in love to think for a moment whether the whispers concerning the Trefusis might or might not be true. Most probably, however, they never reached him; reports never *do* those who could investigate or contradict them, though when your horse has fallen under you everybody assures you they knew it from the beginning—they saw it at once—anybody could tell he was broken-winded, and had been down—if they had thought you did not know it, they would have warned you. One could hardly wonder that if the Trefusis had been proved a perfect Messalina or Frédégonde, no man in love with her would have given her up as she sat that last evening of

idolized him as the sole thing left to her on earth, bitterly sad, to see the impassioned eagerness, the joyous trust with which he looked forward to his future, and know—as she and we, who were not dazzled by the radiance of that exterior beauty of form and feature, knew by instinct—that Constance Trefusis, haughty, overbearing, cold as marble, of neither finished education, cultured mind, nor refined taste, would be the woman of all others from whom, in maturer years, De Vigne would be most certain to revolt. A man's later loves are sure to be an utterly different and distinct style from his earlier. In his youth he only asks for what charms his eyes and senses; in manhood—if he be a man of taste and intellect at all—he will go further, and require interest for his mind and response for his heart.

The last hour of the Old Year chimed at once from the bell-tower of Vigne, the belfry of the old village church, and the countless clocks throughout the house. A little gold Bayadère on the mantle-piece struck the twelve strokes slowly and musically on her tambourine. Lady Flora, in her own boudoir, heard it with passionate tears, and on her knees prayed, as Andromache prayed for the Molossus threatened by the jealous hate of Hermione; for her son's new future that the new year heralded. De Vigne, alone in the library with Constance Trefusis, heard it, and pressed his lips to hers, with words of rapturous delight, to welcome the New Year coming to them both. Sabretasche heard it as he leant over the chair of a very lovely married woman, flirting *à outrance*, and bent backward to me as I passed him: "There goes the death-knell! The last day of De Vigne's freedom is over. Go and put on sackcloth and ashes, Arthur."

The Colonel's words weighed curiously upon me as I rose and dressed on the morning of New Year's-day, as

bright and fair and sunny a dawn as ever broke over the old elm avenues of Vigne. I, a young fellow scarcely two-and-twenty, pretty well as careless, as light-hearted, and as little accustomed to take things au sérieux as any man living, who looked on life and all its chances as gayly as on a game at cricket, who should have come to this wedding as I had gone to a dozen others, only to enjoy myself, drink the *Ài* and Sillery, and flirt with all the filles d'honneur,—dressed with almost as dead a chill upon me as if I had come to De Vigne's funeral rather than to his marriage—a chill that I could not for the life of me shake off, do what I would. I really loved De Vigne, as he, naturally, never cared for me. I have a sad knack of attaching myself strongly to one or two people, and *only* one or two, and my Frestonhills hero had always been among my weaknesses in that particular. When I was a little chap I all but adored him; our haughty senior, who, when he chose to notice us, was so cordially kind, rattled the stumps so magnificently, lent us his rifle and his hack, and taught us such inimitable rules for batting or long bowling. Afterward, he inviting me to Vigne, and I going into the same troop with him, I had seen more of his generous, straightforward, out-of-the-common character, his clear, vigorous, liberal intellect, and I loved him—loved him far too well to see him throw himself away on the Trefusis, without annoyance and futile regret. There seemed little reason for regret, however, as I met him that morning coming out of his room, and he held out his hand with his sweet sunny smile, the smile that passed over his face with a lightning flash, and lit up his dark eyes, and curved the haughty lines of his mouth into greater archness and sweetness than I ever saw in any man's features. I wished him joy in very few words—I wished it him too well to be able to get up an elegant or studied speech.

"Thank you, dear Arthur," he answered, turning his door-handle with a joyous, light-hearted laugh; "I am sure all the fairies would come and bless my wedding-day if you'd anything to do with the ordering of them. But, thank Heaven! fairies or no fairies, my happiness is safe. Come in, old fellow, and have a cigar—my last bachelor smoke—it will keep me quiet till Constance is out of her maids and filles d'honneur's hands. Faugh! how I hate the folly of wedding ceremonial. The idea of dressing up Love in white favors, and giving him bride-cake! It was not so Cupid and Psyche were wed. I think Eros would have turned his back on the whole affair if they had subjected him to a bishop's drawl and a register's prosaic business. Try those Cubas, Arthur."

He smoked because, my dear young ladies, men accustomed to the horrid weed can't do without it, even on their wedding-day, but quiet he was not; he had at all times more of the tornado in him than anything like the Colonel's equable calm, and he was restless and excitable, and happy as only a man in the same cloudless and eager youth, the same fearless and vehement passion, can be. He soon threw down his Cuba, for a servant came to tell him that his mother would like to see him in her own room; and De Vigne, who had been ceaselessly darting glances at the clock, which, I dare say, seemed to him to crawl on its way, went out joyous as Romeo's

Come what sorrow may

It cannot countervail the interchange of joy,

and never thought of Friar Laurence's prophetic reply:

These violent delights have violent ends,

And in their triumph die; like fire and powder,

Which as they kiss consume.

By noon we were all ready. In the magnificent dining-hall,

with its bronzes and its deer's-heads, and the regimental colors of his father's crack corps looped up between the two end windows, with his helmet, saber, and gloves above them, the breakfast, sumptuous enough to have done for St. James's or the Tuileries, was set out with its gold plate, its hot-house flowers, and its thousand delicacies, and in the church the wedding party was assembled with the noon sun streaming in through the colored light of the stained chapel windows. It was a very brilliant party. There were the Marchioness of Malachite and the Ladies Ferrers, exquisitely got up, of course, though looking bored to the last extreme, and appearing to consider it too great an honor for the mosaic pavement to have the glory of bearing their footsteps. There were other dainty ladies of rank, friends of Lady Flora's, sweet, smiling-looking women in toilettes that might have come out of *Le Follet*, and in which, being ladies born, they were easy and careless as children in brown holland pinafores. There were the dozen bridesmaids in their gauzy dresses and their wreaths of holly or of forget-me-not; there were hosts of men, chiefly military, whose morning mufti threw in just enough shade among the bright dresses, as brilliant by themselves as a bouquet of exotics; there were, strangely enough, close together, bizarre, quick-eyed, queer old Lady Fantyre, and soft, fragile Lady Flora; and there was De Vigne, standing near his mother, chatting and laughing with Sabretasche, but all his senses alive to catch the first sound which should tell him of the advent of his bride.

How well I can see him now, as if it were but yesterday, standing on the altar steps in our plain modern morning dress, where in chain armor and silken doublet, in velvet coat and point-lace ruffles, in powdered wig and Garter and Bath ribbons—his ancestors, through long ages past, had wedded noble gentlewomen and fair patrician girls

from the best and bravest houses in the land—I think I see him now, standing erect, his head up, one hand in the breast of his waistcoat, his eyes, dark as night, brilliant and luminous with eagerness; his mouth, with a shadow of a smile softening its firm, clear-cut lips, a little flush of excitement and anticipation on his usually pale cheek; not a shade, not a wish, not a fear seemed to rest upon him. “By Heaven! she’s not half worthy of him,” I muttered, quite unconsciously speaking my thoughts. His mother heard me; her eyes were riveted on him with a mournful tenderness she could not or did not care to conceal, her lips quivered, she looked at me, and shook her head. That wedding party was very brilliant, but there was a strange, dull gloom over it which every one felt yet nobody could explain, and, save in De Vigne himself, and a few of the bridesmaids and younger men, there was none of the joyous light-heartedness which make “marriage-bells” proverbial for mirth and gayety.

There was a very low but an irrepressible murmur of applause as the Trefusis alighted from her carriage, with her *pro tempo* father and donor. Never had we seen her look so handsome. Her magnificent form was seen to full advantage through the shower of Honiton lace that fell around her and about her from her head, till it trailed behind her on the ground. The glowing damask-rose hue of her cheeks, not one whit the paler this morning, and the splendid contour of her profile, were enhanced, not hidden, by the filmy veil. A wreath of orange-flowers, of course, was in her raven hair, and a ceinture of diamonds, worthy an imperial trousseau—one of the gifts of her lavish and bewitched lover, with a negligé and bracelets like it—were jewels fitted to her fully-developed and magnificent person. Very handsome she was—undeniably handsome, and her figure was matchless; but I looked in vain, as her eyes

rested on De Vigne's, for one saving shadow of love, joy, natural emotion, tremulous feeling, to denote that he was not utterly thrown away—wedded to a matchless statue of responseless marble.

She passed up to the altar with her retinue of bridesmaids, in their snowy dresses and bright wreaths. The service began; one of the Ferrers family, the Bishop of Southdown, read the few words that linked them for life with the iron fetters of the Church. Every one who caught the glad, firm, eager tone of De Vigne's "I will," remembers it to this day—remembers with what trusting love, what unhesitating promptitude he took the vow for "better or worse." Prophetic words that say, whatever ill may come of the rash oath sworn, there will be no remedy for it; no help, no repentance that will be of any avail; no furnace strong enough to unsolder the chains they forge forever!

De Vigne passed the ring over her finger; they knelt down, and the priest stretched his hands over them, and forbade those whom God had joined together any man to put asunder. And they rose—husband and wife. They came down the altar steps, De Vigne's face beautiful in its frank joy, its noble pride, looking down upon her with his brilliant eyes, now soft and gleaming, while she looked straight before her, her full ruby lips slightly parted with a half smile, probably of triumph and exultation, that she, unknown and unsupported, called by all an interloper, by many an intrigante and adventuress, was now the wife of the last of a haughty house, whose pride throughout lengthened centuries had ever been that all its men were brave and all its women pure, that not a taint rested on its name, not a stain upon its blood, not a spot upon its shield.

We passed down the church into the vestry, De Vigne gazing down on her with all the wealth of his passionate

heart; but he had no answering glance of love. The day of acting, because the need for acting, was over now. The register was open. De Vigne took the quill, and dashed down hastily his old ancestral name; he passed it into her hand, with fond whispered words. She took it, threw back her veil, and wrote firmly and clearly,

“CONSTANCE LUCY TREFUSIS—OR ——— DAVIS.”

De Vigne was bending fondly over her, his moustaches touching her hair, with its virginal crown, as she wrote. With one great cry he suddenly sprang up, as men will do upon a battle-field when they are struck with their death-wound. Laying her hands in his he held her away from him, reading her face line by line, feature by feature, with the dim horror of a man in a dream of supernatural agony. She smiled in his face, the smile of a devil.

“Granville de Vigne, do you know me now?”

Yes, he knew her now; he still held her at arm's length, staring down upon her, the truth in all its horror eating gradually into his very life, seeming, as it were, to turn his warm veins to ice, and chill his very heart to stone. She laughed—a low mocking laugh of vengeance and derision, that broke strangely on the dead silence round them.

“Yes! Granville, yes! my young lover, I am your Wife, of your own act, your own will. Do you remember the poor milliner you mocked at? Do you remember the peasant girl you deserted? Do you remember the summer day under the chestnut trees, when you laughed at my threats of vengeance? Do you remember, *my husband*? I vowed then that you should love me again, love me really, love me madly; and that it should be *my* turn to disappoint your passion, to crush your pride, to dishonor you forever in your own eyes and the eyes of all others. Before all your titled friends have I taken my revenge,

that it may be the more complete. I would not wait for it, or spare you one iota of your shame. I renounce my own ambitions to humble you lower still. They are hearing us, all your haughty relatives, your fastidious friends, your aristocratic acquaintance, who have tried so long and so vainly to stop you in your mad passion for me. *They* listen to me, and they will go and tell the world what *you* would never have told it, that the last of his line has given his home, his honor, his mother's place, his father's name—that proud name that only yesterday you told me no disgrace had ever touched, no bad blood ever borne—to the despised love of his boyhood, his own cast-off low-born toy—a beggar's child, a ——”

“Peace!”

At that single word, so stern in its iron command, so full of deep, unutterable agony, she was silenced perforce. The blood had left his lips and cheeks, the ashy hue of death had settled on his forehead in a dark crimson stain, like the stain on his own honor; his eyes were set and fixed, as in the unspeakable torture of the Laocoon; his teeth were clinched as men clench them in their death struggle; one hand was pressed on his heart; he had let go his hold on hers; he would never touch even her hand again; and he panted for breath as if he were suffocated. In the horror of the moment all round him were dumb and paralyzed; even she, in her rancorous hate and bitter vengeance on him, paused awe-stricken at the ruin she had wrought, silent before the terrible storm of passion, the unutterable anguish, shame, and horror written in his face.

“Peace! woman—devil! Never cross my path again, or I shall not let you go as I do now!”

Speaking with a strange unnatural calm that sounded more fearful to us than the wildest outburst of rage or anguish, De Vigne, with his right hand pressed hard upon

his chest, turned to leave the church. But his mother threw herself before him. "Granville, my love, my darling! stay, for God's sake, stay!"

He strained her to his heart, then put her gently aside to Sabretasche.

"Let me go—let me go!" he said, hoarsely.

We could none of us attempt to stop him. He pushed his way through the crowd like a madman, and we heard the rapid rush of his carriage wheels as they rolled away—God knows where.

PART THE SEVENTH.

I.

SABRETASCHE STUDIES THE BELLE OF THE SEASON.

ON another New Year's Day, eight years from that marriage in the church at Vigne, the full relentless tropic sun streamed down on the parched sand and tangled jungle of India, where, in the sultry stillness of the noon, when all nature was hushed into repose, a contest for life and death raged with all the fury of men's passions unchained and their love of blood unsated. Far away on the blue hills slept the golden noontide rays, still and motionless in the tropic heat; the great palm-leaves folded themselves up for a siesta; the jaguars and the tigers lay couched in the cool dank jungle grass; the florikens and parrots closed their soft, brilliant-hued wings to rest; all nature in the vast mountain solitudes was at peace; even the bananas and bamboos had ceased their gentle motion, and the silver river was calm and unruffled as a tideless lake,

pausing in its rapid rush from its mountain cradle to its ocean grave. All nature was hushed and still, except the passions of man; they, always warring, never silenced by the soft voices of inanimate beauties, were struggling fiercely under the low trees and amid the thick jhow jungle. It was a skirmish of English cavalry and Beloochee infantry, in a small plain between large woods or hunting-grounds, and the sun shone with a fiery glow on the dark uniforms, glittering sabers, and white linen helmets of the Europeans, and the gorgeous turbans, bright-hued garments, and large dark shields of the mountaineers, as they struggled together, darkening the air with their clashing swords, and breaking the holy hush of wood and hills with long rolling shouts, loud and terrible as thunder. The mountaineers doubled the English force; they had surprised them, moreover, as, not thinking of attack, they trotted onward from one garrison to another, and the struggle was sharp and fierce. The English were but half a regiment of Hussars, under command of their Major, and the odds were great against them. But at their head was one to whom fear was a word in an unknown tongue, in whose blood was fire, and whose heart was bronze. Sitting down in his saddle as calmly as at a meet, his eyes steady and quick as an eagle's, hewing right and left like a common trooper, the English Major fought his way. The Beloochee swords gleamed round him without harm, while, let them guard their turbans as they might with their huge shields, every stroke of his saber told home. They surged around him, they caught his charger's bridle, they opposed before him one dense and bristling forest of swords; still he bore a charmed life, alike in single combat hand to hand, or in the broken charge of his scattered and decimated troop. In the fierce noontide glow, in the pitiless vertical sun-rays, while the wild shouts of the natives

rang up to the still blue heavens above, and the ceaseless clang and clash of the sabers and shields startled the birds from their rest, and roused the slumbering tiger from his lair, the English Major fought like grim death, as those blows glanced harmless off him, as from Achilles of old; fought till the native warriors, stern and savage heroes as they were, fled from his path, awe-stricken at his fierce valor, his matchless strength, his godlike charm from all their efforts to harm him. He pursued them at the head of his cavalry, after the skirmish was over, some way across the plain; then, as he drew the bridle of his foaming and trembling horse, and put his sword back into its sheath, another man near him looked at him in amazement: "On my life, De Vigne, what an odd fellow you are. You look like the very devil in the midst of the fight; and yet when it's over, after sharper work than any even we have seen, deuce take you if you're not as cool as if you'd walked out of a barrack-yard."

The same 1st of January, while they were enjoying this cavalry skirmish in Scinde, we were being bored to death by a review at Woolwich. The day was soft and bright, no snow or frost, as Sabretasche, with his Italianized constitution, remarked with a thanksgiving. There were Ours and Cardigan's Eleventh, and the fashion-famous Twelfth, and one or two regiments of Dragoons from Uxbridge and Hounslow, with the Blues from Albany Barracks, some of the line, and several batteries of Horse Artillery; there was Royalty to inspect us; there were some of the prettiest women possible in their carriages in the inner circle, though it was *not* the season; and there was as superb a luncheon as any military man could ask, in the finest mess-room in England; and we, ungrateful, I suppose, for the goods the gods gave us, swore away at it all as the greatest bore imaginable. It is a pretty scene enough, I dare

say, to those who have only to look on; the bright uniforms and the white plumes, the grays and the bays, the chestnuts and the roans, the dashing staff and the cannon's peaceful roar, the marching and the counter-marching, the storming and the sortie, the rush and the charge, and the gallop of four or five troops of horse, formed into line in sections of threes, with their lances gleaming diamond bright in the sunshine, and their chargers spurred along, seemingly with go enough in them, if they were but racers, to win the Derby itself—I dare say it may be all very pretty to lookers-on, but to us, heated and bothered and tired, obliged to go into harness which we hated as cordially as we loved it the first day we sported it in our cornethood, we thought it a nuisance inexpressible, and should have far preferred fatiguing ourselves for some purpose under the jungle-trees in Scinde.

We were profoundly thankful when it was all over and done with, when H.R.H. F.M. had departed to Windsor without luncheon, and we were free to go up and chat with the women in the inner circle, and take them into the mess-room. There were very few we knew, yet up in town; but parliament was just about to meet very unusually early that year, and there were several from jointure houses, or charming places at Richmond, or Twickenham, or Kew, with whom we were well acquainted.

"There is Lady Molyneux," said Sabretasche, who was now Lieut.-Colonel of Ours. "I dare say that is her daughter with her. I remember she came out last season, and she was very much admired, but I missed her by going that Ionian Isle trip with Brabazon. Shall we go and be introduced, Arthur? She does not look bad style, though to be sure these English winter days are as destructive to a woman's beauty as anything well can be."

The Colonel wheeled his horse round up to the Moly-

neux barouche, and I followed him. Eight years had not altered Sabretasche in one iota; he had led the same lounging, indolent, refined, fashionable, artistic kind of life, his face was as exquisitely handsome, his wit as light and sparkling, his conquests as various and far-famed as ever; he was still soldier, artist, sculptor, dilettante, man of fashion, all in one, the universal criterion of taste, the critic of all beauties, pictures, singers, or horses, popular with all men, adored by all women, and really chained by none. Therefore Vivian Sabretasche, whose word at White's or the U. S. could do more to damage or increase her daughter's reputation as a belle than any other man's, had a very pleasant bow and smile in the distance from Lady Molyneux, and a very delicate lavender kid glove belonging to that peeress, put between his fingers when he and I rode up to her carriage.

"Ah!" cried Lady Molyneux, a pretty, supercilious-looking woman, who was *passée*, but would not by any means allow it, "I am delighted to see you both. We only came to town yesterday. Lord Molyneux has taken a house in Lowndes Square. It was so tiresome of him; but he would do it: he is never happy out of London, and there is positively scarcely a soul that we know here as yet. Rushbrooke persuaded us to come to this review to-day, and Violet wished it. Allow me to introduce my daughter to you. Violet, love, Colonel Sabretasche, Mr. Chévasney, Miss Molyneux."

Violet Molyneux looked up in the Colonel's face as he bowed to her, and probably thought—at least she looked as if she did—that she had never seen any man so attractive as the Colonel, as he returned her gaze with his large, soft, mournful eyes, and that exquisite gentleness and high-breeding of manner, to which he owed half his reputation in the tender secrets of the boudoir and flirting-

room; and leaning his hand on the door of the carriage, bent down from his saddle, studying the new belle, while he laughed and chatted with her and her mother. We used to jest, and say Sabretasche kept a list of the new beauties entered for the year—as *Bell's Life* has a list of the young fillies entered for the Oaks—made a cross against those worth noticing, and checked off those already flirted with and slain; for the Colonel—though he was the last man to say so—was indisputably as dangerous to the beau sexe as Pignerol de Lauzun.

Violet Molyneux was certainly worthy of being entered in this mythical book, for she was irresistibly charming and exquisitely lovely; her complexion white as Parian, with a wild-rose color in her cheeks, her eyes large, brilliant, and wonderfully expressive, generally flashing with the sweetest laughter; her hair of a soft, bright, chestnut hue; her figure slight, but perfect in symmetry; on her delicate features the stamp of quick intelligence, heightened by the greatest culture; and in her whole air and manner the grace of good ton and fashionable dress, mingled with the frankness, the vivacity, the joyous light-heartedness, the candid truth-telling of a child. Bright, natural, gifted with the gayest spirits, the cleverest brain, and the sweetest temper possible, one could not wonder that she was talked over at clubs; engaged by more than her tablets could record at every ball; and followed by a perfect cavalcade when she cantered, faster than any other girl would have dreamed of doing in town, down the crowded Ride. Sabretasche soon took her off to the mess-room, a Lieutenant-General escorting her mother, and I found myself sitting on her left at the luncheon, an occasion I did not improve as much as I otherwise should have done, from the fact of Sabretasche's being on the other side, and persuading the young lady to give all her attention to him; for Sabre-

tasche, though he was immeasurably fastidious, and scarcely ever was really interested in any women, liked to flirt with them all, and always made himself charming to them. The Hon. Violet seemed to find him charming too, and chatted with him gayly and frankly, as if she had known him for ages. Though she was one of the admitted belles, and was run after (and enjoyed the pursuit, too) by scores of men, she was free, natural, and unartificial as the little flower after which she had been named; a wonderful treat to Sabretasche, so sick to death of artificialities and commonplaces.

"How I enjoyed the review to-day!" she began. "If there are three sights greater pets of mine than another, they are a review, a race, and a meet, because of the dear horses."

"Or their masters?" said Sabretasche, quietly.

Violet Molyneux laughed merrily.

"Oh! their masters are very pleasant too, though they are certainly never so handsome, or so tractable, or so honest as their quadrupeds. Most of my friends abuse gentlemen. I don't; they are always kind to me, and, unless they are very young or stupid, generally speaking, amusing."

"Miss Molyneux, what a treat!" smiled Sabretasche, who could say impudent things so gracefully that every one liked them from his lips. "You have the candor to *say* what every other young lady *thinks*. We know you all like us very much, but none of you will ever admit it. But you say you enjoyed the review. I thought no belle, after her first season, ever condescended to 'enjoy' anything."

"Don't they?" laughed Violet; "how I pity them! I am an exception, then, for I enjoy an immense number of things—everything, indeed, except my presentation, where I was ironed quite flat, and very nearly crushed to death,

and, finally, came before her Majesty in a state of collapse, like a maimed India-rubber ball. Not enjoy things! Why, I enjoy my morning gallop on Bonbon, I enjoy my flowers, and birds, and dogs. I delight in the opera, I adore waltzing, I perfectly idolize music, and the day when a really good book comes out, or a really good painting is exhibited, I am in a seventh heaven. Not enjoy things! Oh, Colonel Sabretasche, when I cease to enjoy life, I hope I shall cease to live!"

"You will die very early, then," said Sabretasche, with something of that deepened melancholy which occasionally stole over him, but which he was always careful to conceal in society.

She started, and turned her bright eyes upon him, surprised and stilled:

"Colonel Sabretasche! Why?"

He smiled; his usual gay, courteous smile:

"Because the gods will grudge earth so fair a flower, and men so true a vision, of what angels *ought* to be; but—thanks to Scripture, poets, and painters—*never are*."

She shook her head with a pretty impatience:

"Ah! pray do not waste compliments upon me; I detest them."

"Vraiment?" murmured the Colonel, with a little quiet, incredulous glance.

"Yes, I do, indeed. You don't believe me, I dare say. Because I have so many of them, Captain Chevasney? Perhaps it is. I have many more than are really complimentary, either to my taste or my intellect."

"Ladies like compliments as children like bonbons," said Sabretasche, in his low trainante voice. "They will take them till they can take no more; but if they see ever so insignificant a one going to another, how they long for

it, how they grudge it, how they burn to add it to their store! This is *cœl de perdrix*, will you try it?"

"No, thank you," answered the Hon. Violet, with a ringing laugh. The sarcasms on her sex did not seem to touch or disturb her; she rather enjoyed them than otherwise. "What is the news to-day?"

"Nothing remarkable," answered Sabretasche. "Births, deaths, and marriages all put together, to remind men, like Philip of Macedon's valet, that they come into the world to suffer in it, and go out again. Leaders full of toadyism, or bullying of the government, according as the journal is Conservative or Liberal. Long letters from gentlemen, frightfully prone to the didactic style, upon all the evils of England, whose name is legion; yet to remedy which, I question if one of those portly plethoric friends and lovers of the state would like individually to leave his arm-chair and sacrifice his own personal comforts à la Curtius. Letters on the Income-tax, from men who dodge it all their lives; letters on Education, from men who, to judge from their grammar, never received any, and, therefore, you will say, can the better, perhaps, appreciate the luxuries of it; letters on Religious Impetus, written by the aid of a whisky-bottle; articles on Ragged Schools, penned eloquently by scoundrels in quod; extraordinary meteors thrown in to fill up a gap; criticisms on good novels by beardless boys, who don't know the meaning of half their words or quotations. Much like all other news, you see, Miss Molyneux, except that your name is down as among those arrived in town, and my friend De Vigne is mentioned for the Bath."

"Ah! that Major de Vigne!" cried Violet. "Where is he?—who is he?—what has he really been doing? I heard Lord Hilton talking about him last night, saying that he had been a most wonderful fellow in India, and

that the natives called him—what was it?—‘the Charmed Life,’ I think. Is he your friend?”

“My best,” said Sabretasche. “Not Jonathan to my David, you know, nor Iolais to my Orestes: we don’t do that sort of thing in these days. We like each other, but as for dying for each other, that would be far too much trouble; and, besides, it would be bad ton—too demonstrative. But I like him; he is as true steel as any man I know, and I shall be delighted to have a cigar with him again, provided it is not too strong a one. Dying for one’s Patroclus would be preferable to enduring his bad tobacco.”

Violet looked at him with her radiant, beaming glance:

“Well, Colonel Sabretasche, if your cigar is not kindled warmer than your friendship, it will very soon go out again, that’s all!”

“Soit! there are plenty more in the case,” smiled Sabretasche, “and one Havana is as good as another, for anything I see. But about De Vigne you have heard quite truly; he has been fighting in Scinde like all the Knights of the Round Table merged in one. He is Major of the —th Hussars, and he has done more with his handful than a general of division might have done with a whole squadron. His Colonel was put hors de combat with a ball in his hip, and De Vigne, of course, had the command for some time. The natives call him the Charmed Life, because, despite the risks he runs, and the carelessness with which he has exposed his life, he has not had a single scratch, and both the Sepoys he fights with, and the Beloochees he fights against, stand in a sort of awe of him. The —th is ordered home, so we are looking out to see him soon. I shall be heartily glad, poor old fellow!”

“Provided, I suppose, he bring cheroots with him good enough to allow him admittance?” said Violet.

"Sous-entendu," said the Colonel. "I would infinitely prefer losing a friend to incurring a disagreeable sensation. Would not you?"

"Oh! of course," answered the young lady, with a rapid flash of her mischievous eyes. "Frederick's feelings, when he saw Katte beheaded, must have been trifling child's play to what the Sybarite suffered from the doubled rose-leaves!"

"Undoubtedly," said Sabretasche, tranquilly. "I am glad you agree with me. If we do not take care and undouble the rose-leaves for ourselves, we may depend on it we shall find no one who will take so much trouble for us. To 'Aide-toi et Dieu t'aidera' they should add 'Aide-toi et le monde t'aidera,' for I have always noticed that Providence and the world generally befriend those who can do without the help."

"Perhaps there is a deeper meaning in that," answered Violet, "and more justice than first seems. After all, those who do aid themselves may deserve it the most, and those whose heads and hands are silent and idle hardly have a right to have the bonbons of existence picked out and given to them."

"I don't know whether we have a right to them, but we find them pleasant, and that is all I look at; and besides, Miss Molyneux, when you have lived a little longer in the world, you will invariably find that it is to those who have much that much is given, and *vice versa*. Guineas pour into the gold plate held by that 'decidedly pious person' Lord Savinggrace, but pence will do for the parish poor-box. Turtle and tokay are given to an heir-apparent, but a cutlet and new port will suffice for a younger son. Establish yourself on a pedestal, the world will worship you, even though the pedestal be of very poor brick and mortar; lie modestly down on a moorland, though it be, like James

Fergusson, for genius to study science, why, you may lie there forever if you wait for anybody to pick you up."

"True enough," said Violet, "because the guineas given to Lord Savinggrace will bring you éclat in the 'religious world,' (an éclat, by the way, I should shun as offensive alike to good taste and all decency,) and in the parish poor-box their name is unrecorded. With the heir-apparent they look for numberless good dinners in return, whereas the younger son can do them no good whatever; and, with regard to the pedestal, why, we know the nation ran after and caressed Castlemaine, while they neglected and starved John Milton, because the countess held good things in her gift, and the poet was poverty-stricken and on the side of a fallen cause."

Sabretasche laughed.

"Yes, the world has a trick of serving, like the Swiss Guard and the secret police, whichever side is uppermost and pays them best. However, thank Heaven I want nothing of it, and it is very civil to me."

"*Because* you want nothing of it?"

"Precisely."

II.

THE "CHARMED LIFE" COMES BACK AMONG US.

"THANK God I have found a girl who has some notion of conversation. I believe with the Persians that ten measures of talk were sent down from heaven, and the ladies took nine; but of conversation, argument, repartee—the real use of that most facile, dextrous, sharp-pointed weapon, the tongue—what woman has a notion? They employ a thousand superlatives in describing a dress, they

exhaust a million expletives in damning their bosom friend, their boudoirs hear more twaddle than the Commons—si c'est possible—and they rail harder over their coffee-cups at their sisters' shortcomings than a popular preacher over his sounding-board at the vices he pets *sub rosa*. But as for conversation, they have not a notion of it; if you begin an argument, they either get into a passion or subside into monosyllables. If you chat with them at a ball, the silly ones will rattle you to death on the score of fashion, new hobbies, fresh scandals, and the most strictly private on dits; the clever ones will knock you down with a 'decided opinion,' and so bewilder your mind with Greek roots, graptolites, modern economics, or Silurian strata, that you feel humbled into the lowest depths of your bottes vernies, and cut bas blues for the rest of your existence; and if you chance, which it is ten to one you do, on the simple ingénues, they drive you distracted by their Yes and their No, their measured-out enthusiasms, a wine-glassful for Jenny Lind, a tumblerful for Tennyson, and a good pint for the Exeter Hall meetings. A woman who has good conversation is as rare as one who does not care for scandal. I have met them occasionally in Paris salons, and we have found one to-day."

So spoke Sabretasche at mess that night apropos of Violet Molyneux, who was under discussion in common with our ox-tail and our wine.

"Then you allow her the *croix d'honneur* of your approval, Colonel," said Montessor, of Ours.

"Certainly I do," said Sabretasche. "This soup is not good, it is too thin. She is exquisitely pretty, even through my eye-glass, which has a sad knack of finding the lilies cosmétique and the eyebrows tinting, and, what is much better, she is actually natural and fresh, and can talk as if Nature had given her brains and reading had cultivated

them. I dare say they count on her making a good marriage."

"No doubt they do. Jockey Jack has hardly a rap, and is as poor for a peer as I should be for a professional beggar—the richest chaps going," replied another man—Snaffle Pigott, (we called him Snaffle, after a match he won driving from Hounslow to Knightsbridge Mews.) "They can't keep up their Irish place—Corallyne, isn't it called?—so they hang out in town three parts of the year, and take a shooting-box, or visit about for the rest. Confound it, I wouldn't be one of the Upper House, without a good pot of money to keep up my dignity, for anything I could see. Violet came out last season, you know?"

"Yes, I know; I remember hearing she made a great sensation," answered the Colonel. "Jack Ormsby and Allington told me she was the best thing of the season—the first, by-the-by, I was ever out of London. Lady Molyneux must try to run down Regalia or Cavendish Grey, or one of the great matrimonial coups. My lady knows how to manœuvre, too; I wonder she should have a daughter so frank and unaffected."

"They've seen nothing of one another," answered Pigott, who always knew everything about everybody, from the price Lord Goodwood gave for his thorough-bred roan fillies, to the private thoughts that Lady Honoria Bando-line wrote each night in her violet velvet diary. "My lady's always running out somewhere; if you were to call at eight in the morning you'd find her gone off to early matins; if you were to call at twelve, she'd be off to the Sanctified and Born-again Clear-starchers' jubilee with Lord Savinggrace; at two, she'd be closeted and lunching with her spiritual master—whoever he chanced to be—who gives her confession and takes croquis and Amon-tillado en même temps; at three, she'd be having a snug

boudoir flirtation; at four, she'd be in the Park, of course, or at a morning concert; at six, she'd be dressing for dinner; at ten, she'd be off to three or four soirées musicales, balls, and crushes; and so between the two she certainly carries out that delightful work, 'How to Make the Best of Both Worlds,' which my Low Church sister sent me the other day."

"With the idea that you were doing your very utmost to make the worst of 'em, Charlie?" laughed Sabretasche. "I don't know the volume—Heaven forefend!—but the title sounds to me sneaky, as if it wanted to get the sweets out of both, yet compromise itself with neither. Your sketch of Lady Molyneux is as true to life as one of Leech's delicious sketches of character, but certainly her child is about as unlike her as could possibly be imagined."

"Oh, by George! yes," assented Montessor, heartily; "Miss Vy hasn't one bit of nonsense about her."

"And she's a divine waltzer," added Stafford Gore; "turn her round in a nutshell."

"And can't she ride, just!" broke in little Fan, just joined.

"And her voice smashes Alboni's to pieces—her shake's perfection," cried Telfer, a bit of a dilettante, and a composer in a small way for the flute.

"And—she can talk!" said Sabretasche, in his quiet voice, so low and gentle after the other fellows. "I will call in Lowndes Square to-morrow. I say, so the —th is ordered home. We shall see De Vigne home again."

"Unless he exchange to a regiment still on active service," said Pigott.

"He won't do that," I answered. "I heard from him last Marseilles mail, and he said that as his troop was ordered to England, he intended to return overland. Poor dear old fellow! what ages it is since we've seen him!"

"It is eight years, isn't it?" said Sabretasche, setting down his champagne-glass with half a sigh. "He has had some sharp work out there. I hope it has done him good. I never wish to see a man look as he looked last time I saw him."

"Where's his rascally wife!" asked Montressor.

"The Trefusis? For Heaven's sake don't call her his wife," said I, impatiently. "I'll never give her his name, though the law may—she-devil that she is. She is at Paris, cut by all our set, of course, but living with her antique Mephistopheles the Fantyre, in part of a dashing hotel in the Champs Elysées, keeping a green and gold chasseur six feet high, and giving very suivies soirées to a certain class of untitled English and titled French, who don't care a fig for her story, and care a good deal for her suppers."

"Which she buys with De Vigne's tin, hang her!" swore Montressor. "She calls herself Mrs. De Vigne, I suppose?"

"She is Mrs. De Vigne," said Sabretasche, with that bitter sneer which occasionally passed over his delicate, impassive features. "You forget the sanctity, solemnity, and beauty of the marriage tie, my dear Montressor. You know it is too 'holy' to be severed, either by reason, justice, or common sense."

"Holy fiddlesticks!" retorted Montressor, contemptuously; "the best law for that confounded woman would have been Lynch law, and if I'd had my way, I would have taken her out of church that morning and shot her straight away out of hand."

"Too handsome to be shot, Fred," said Pigott; "if she'd been an ugly woman, I would say yes, but there are too few faces like that to rid the earth of them."

"She will not be so handsome in a few years; she will

soon grow coarse," said the Colonel, that most fastidious of female critics. "She is the full-blown dashing style to strike you youngsters, and send you mad about her, but there is not in her face a single charm that will *last*."

"Are there in any?" cried Pigott. "None last long with you, Colonel, I fancy?"

Sabretasche laughed gayly.

"To be sure not!

Therefore is love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

Don't you admit the truth of that?"

"I should hope I do. Well, after all, his marriage won't matter dreadfully to De Vigne, except the loss of the three thousand pounds a year he allows her to make her keep on the Continent; though, to be sure, there's the blow to his pride, and he is a terribly proud fellow."

Sabretasche looked up. "Some men's honor is sensitive, Pigott; others—like their understandings—somewhat dull."

Pigott did not relish it; his fastidiousness was not as delicate as the Colonel's or De Vigne's, and his gift of brains as small as ever passed a man through Sandhurst, about the minimum, I should say, of mortal intelligence.

"Well, why did he do it? He needn't have been such a fool!" he said, sulkily.

Sabretasche's soft, mournful eyes lit up angrily.

"If you are never more of a fool, Pigott, than De Vigne, you may thank Heaven! His generosity and nobility of nature were deceived and wronged, and his hot passions led him into an error of judgment which will darken all his life; but if every man I know were as worthy respect and admiration as he, the world would be a better one, and I, at least, will never sit by to hear him ridiculed."

Those were very strong words from our gay, careless, laissez-faire, impassive, indolent Colonel, and they had their effect accordingly. He spoke very quietly—not raising his voice; but Pigott cared to provoke him no further. He drank down his sherry with rather a nervous laugh.

“Oh! we all know he’s a brick, and all I hope is, that he won’t come home and tumble into love with Violet Molyneux, or some other young filly.”

Sabretasche laughed; he hated dissensions, and was always ready to restore harmony to any table.

“I hope not, too. That young Irish beauty is exceedingly love-provoking. She has done a good deal of damage, hasn’t she?”

Six weeks or so after our Woolwich review, I was dining with Sabretasche at his own house—one of those charming exclusive little dinner parties where he invited first-rate wits to partake of first-rate wines, and where every one, even the most blasé, was perforce amused and pleased. The other men had just left, (all men celebrated for talent and ton, for the entrée to Sabretasche’s house was as difficult as a pass to Almack’s, when Almack’s was in its prime,) and the Colonel and I were sitting before the inner drawing-room fire with the Cid stretched on the rug between us; Sabretasche lying full length on a sofa inhaling perfume from his luxurious hookah, and I in a low chair smoking a Manilla. Why the Colonel was so kind to me, and talked so much to me, when he had all the best men in town at his command, I must leave. I never did understand it, and never shall. I think it was, first, my being honest and fresh to life that he liked; and afterward, probably, our mutual attachment to, and sorrow for, De Vigne, gave us something in common. We were talking of him to-night, for the —th had been ordered home, and he coming

by himself, *via* Marseilles, was expected in a few days at furthest.

"What a sin it is that such a union should be valid," said Sabretasche. "I think I hear that wretched woman tell me, with her cold triumphant smile, 'Colonel Sabretasche, my father's name was Trefusis, my mother's name was Davis—one was a gentleman, the other a beggar-girl. I have as much or as little right to one as to the other. Let your friend sue for a divorce, the law will not give it him.'"

"Too true; the law will not. Our divorce law is—"

"An inefficient, insufficient, cruel farce," said Sabretasche, more energetically than I had ever heard him say anything in his life. "In an infatuated hour a man saddles himself with a she-devil like the Trefusis—a liar, a drunkard, a mad woman; what redress is there for him? None. All his life through he must drag on the same clog; fettering all his energies, crushing out all his hopes, chaining down his very life, festering at his very heart-strings. There, at his hearth, must sit the embodied curse—there, in his home, it must dwell—there, at his side, it must be, till God release him from it!"

I looked up at him in surprise, it was so very unusual to see him so warm about anything. He took up his hookah again and pointed to a marble statuette—one of his own chipping, by the way—on which the fire-light was gleaming.

"Look at that little Venus Anadyomene, Arthur, with the fire-light shining on her; quite Rembrandtesque, isn't it? I'll paint it so to-morrow."

"Do, and give the picture to Violet Molyneux. But apropos of your remarks, how would you redress the divorce shortcomings? If you divorce for insanity, every husband sick of his wife can get a certificate of lunacy against her. If for drunkenness, what woman will be safe from having

drams innumerable sworn against her? If for incompatibility of temper, after every little temporary quarrel scores would fly to the divorce courts, and be heartily sorry for it after. Come, how would you redress it?"

"My dear fellow," said Sabretasche, languidly, "I'm not in parliament, thank Heaven for it; for, if I were, my conscience would be always pricking me to try and introduce a little liberal feeling and common sense among that body, and, as the operation would be of an Augean-stable character, I'm much too idle a man for it to be to my taste. You talk like a sage. I only feel—for poor De Vigne, I mean."

"You don't feel more for him than I, Colonel, and though it isn't the thing to execute corporeal punishment on ladies, I should have more delight in kicking that miserable, hateful Jezabel of a woman within an inch of her life, than any rapture you could bestow on me. That such a union should be legal is a disgrace to any country. At the same time, divorce seems to me, of all the niceties of legislature, the most ticklish and unsatisfactory to adjust. If you were to shut the door on divorce, there is an evil unbearable; if you open it too wide, almost as much harm may accrue. Divorces are a necessity of common sense and common peace, yet there is some sense in it, that if it be made so easy that in twelve months' time, when their fancy is faded, people can break their chains and leave one another at their will, marriage will be no longer any union of heart and mind, but a mere social compact, without interest or solemnity, and men will take a wife as they buy a horse, to turn it over to some other possessor and buy another that they fancy better."

"My dear Chevasney, you talk like a paterfamilias, a Solon of seventy, a moral machine without blood, or bones, or feelings," said Sabretasche, impatiently. "I don't care

a straw for theories, I look at facts. Put yourself in the position, Arthur, and then sit in judgment. I take it if every man had to do that, the laws would be at once wiser and more lenient; whereas now, on the contrary, it is your man who has the stolen pieces in his pocket who cries out the most vehemently for the thief to be hanged, hoping to throw off suspicion. Put yourself in the position! Now you are young and easily swayed, you fall in love—as you, phrase it—with some fine figure or pretty face. Down you go headlong, never stopping to consider whether her mind is attuned to yours, her tastes in common with yours, her character such as will go well with yours in the long intercourse that takes so much to make it harmony, so little to make it discord. You marry her; the honeymoon is barely out before the bandage is off your eyes. We will suppose you see your wife in her true colors—coarse, perhaps low-bred, with not a fiber of her moral nature that is attuned to yours, not a chord in heart or mind that is in harmony with yours. She revolts all your better tastes, she checks all your warmer feelings, she debases all your higher instincts; union with her humbles you in your own eyes; contact and association with her lower your tone of thought, and imperceptibly draw you down to her own level. Your home is one ceaseless scene of pitiful jangle or of coarser violence. She makes your house a hell, she peoples your hearth with fiends; she and her children—hideous likenesses of herself—bear your own name, and make you loathe it. Perhaps you meet one the utter contrast of her, the fond ideal in your youth of what your wife was to be, one who touches all the better springs, all the higher aspirations; one in whom you realize all you might have been, all you might have done! You look on Heaven, and devils hold you back. You thirst for a higher, purer, more ennobling life, and fiends mock at you

and will not let you reach it. What escape is there for you? None but the grave! Realize this—*realize* it in all its hideous force—and you will feel how, as a prisoner lies dying for the scent of the free fresh air, while the free man sits contentedly within, so a man, happily married or not married at all, looks on the question of divorce in a very different light to a man fettered thus, with the torments of both Prometheus and Tantalus, the vulture gnawing at his vitals, the lost joys mocking him out of reach!”

His indolence was gone, his impassiveness changed to vivid earnestness; his melancholy eyes grew more mournful still, and there was a cadence in his voice, a powerful pathos, which held one spell-bound. I shuddered involuntarily.

“You draw a terrible picture, Colonel, and a true enough one, no doubt, as many men would witness if one could see into their homes and hearts. But what I want to know is, how to redress it? What Sir Cresswell Cresswell ever would, or ever could, dive into the hidden mysteries of human life, the unuttered secrets of mutual love or mutual hate? What judge could say where the blame lay; or, seeing only the surface, and hearing only the outside, weigh the just points of harmony or incompatibility, fitness or unfitness? Who can decide between man and woman? Who, seeing the little of the inner existence that is ever revealed in a law court, could judge between them? God knows, it is an awful thing for a man’s life to be cursed by a mistake of judgment, a lack of penetration, a boyish madness, a momentary passion; cursed, as you say, to the grave. For no fault he incurs a hideous punishment. But how redress it? We know how mischievously absurd the divorce mania was in Germany? How Dorothea Veit broke with the best of husbands, on the plea of want of ‘sympathy,’ and went over to Frederick Schlegel;

and how the Sensitive doctrine of which Schleiermacher was inaugurator, made it only necessary to be tied, to feel the want of being 'sympathetically matched,' and being untied again. There are, doubtless, many noble-minded, passionate-hearted, high-ambitioned men, whom it is a sin and an agony not to divorce at once from the woman chosen in an ill-judged and hasty moment, whose very lack of harmony is more torture to his fine-strung nature than far greater miseries to coarser minds. But, again, there are men far more numerous than they who would make it an excuse for their own inconstancy; who would marry then as carelessly as they flirt now, and would, as soon as a pretty face had grown stale to their eye, find out that she was a vixen, a virago, addicted to gin, or anything that suited their purpose, though she might really have every virtue under heaven. Don't you think that it is impossible, as long as human nature is so wayward, changeable, and short-sighted, or marriage numbered among our social institutions at all, to trim—as Halifax calls it—between too much liberty in it and too little?"

"Hush, hush, my good Arthur!" cried the Colonel, with a gesture of deprecation; "pray keep all that for the benches of St. Stephen's some twenty years hence; it is far too chill, sage, and rational for me to appreciate it. I prefer feeling to reasoning—always have done. Possibly, the evils might accrue that you prophesy so mathematically, but that does not at all disprove what I say, that the marriage fetters of Church and law are at times the heaviest handcuffs men can wear, heavier than those that chain the galley slave to his oar, for *he* has committed crime to justify his punishment, whereas a man tricked into marriage by an artful intrigante, or hurried into it by a mad fancy, has done no harm to any one—except himself. If you have such a taste for reason, listen to what John

Milton—that grave, calm Puritan and philosophic republican, the last man in the universe to let his passions run away with him—says on the score.” He stretched out his hand to a stand of books near him, and took out a Tetrachordon, bound, as all his books were, in cream-colored vellum and gold. “Hear what John Milton says: ‘Him I hold more in the way to perfection who foregoes an impious, ungodly, and discordant wedlock, to live according to peace, and love, and God’s institution in a fitter choice; than he who debars himself the happy experience of all godly, which is peaceful conversation in his family, to live a contentious and unchristian life not to be avoided; in temptations not to be lived in; only for the false keeping of a most unreal nullity, a marriage that hath no affinity with God’s intentions, a daring phantasm, a mere toy of terror; awing weak senses, to the lamentable superstition of ruining themselves, the remedy whereof God in his law vouchsafes us; which, not to dare use, he warranting, is not our perfection, but is our infirmity, our little faith, our timorous and low conceit of charity, and in them who force us to it, is their masking pride and vanity to seem holier and more circumspect than God.’ What do you say now? Can you deny the justice, the wisdom, the wide charity and reason of his arguments? It is true he was unhappy with his wife, but he was a man to speak, not from passion, but from conviction. Milton was made of that stern stuff that would cut off your right hand if it offended you. In Rome he would have been a Virginus, a Cincinnatus; in the early Christians’ days, he would have died with Stephen, endured with Paul. He is not a man like myself, who do no earthly good that I know of, who am swayed by impulse, imagination, passion—a hundred thousand things, who have never checked a wish or denied a desire, and who live simply pour m’amuser. Milton is one

of your saints and heroes, yet even he has the compassionate wisdom to see that divorce would save many a man whom an unfit union drives headlong to his ruin. He knows that it is cowardice and hypocrisy, and, as he says, a wish to seem holier and more circumspect than God, which makes your nineteenth century precisians forbid what nature and reason, the inborn bias and the acquired knowledge of human beings alike demand, and to which, if the Church and the law courts forbade freedom ever so, they would find some means to pioneer their own way. You may cage an eagle out of the sunlight, but the bird will find some road to life, and light, and liberty, or die beating his wings in hopeless effort.—Look there! Good Heavens, there is De Vigne!”

I sprang up; he rose very quickly for his usual indolent movements. In the doorway stood De Vigne, and we grasped his hands silently, none of us speaking for some minutes. The memory of that last scene in the church at Vigne was strong upon us all, and I, God bless him! loved his face too well to look on it again quite calmly after eight years’ absence.

Then Sabretasche put his hand on his shoulder, and pushed him gently into an arm-chair before the fire, and said, softly and fondly as a man speaks to a woman,—

“Dear old fellow! there is no need for us to say welcome home!”

De Vigne looked up with something of his old, frank, cordial, sunny smile, though it faded almost instantly.

“No need, indeed; and *don’t* say it. I know you are both glad to see me, and let us forget that we have ever been separated. Arthur, old boy, if it wouldn’t sound an insult, I should tell you you were *grown*; and as for you, Sabretasche, you are not a whit altered; it is my belief you wouldn’t change if you lived as long as Sue’s Wan-

dering Jew. They told me at the barracks Arthur was dining with you, and so I came on straight. My luggage is still in the *Pera*, but I brought up some cheroots worth a guinea a piece, I vow. Try them, both of you. Ah, how I have wanted you two and the Dashers out in Scinde. You would have enjoyed it, Arthur, and I believe Sabretasche himself would have found a new sensation."

We saw that he wished to sweep away the past, and avoid all allusion to his own fate, and we fell in with his humor. Lounging and smoking round the fire, we tried to ignore every painful subject; though as I looked at him I found it hard work not to utter aloud a curse on the woman who had sent him into exile.

Those eight years had not passed without leaving their stamp upon him. His face had lost the glow, the bright eagerness, the rounded outline of his earlier youth: but to me, at least, it had a far higher beauty, the beauty of experience and reflection. Pale he had always been, but now the pallor was that of marble, as if the hot young blood surging through his veins had been suddenly frozen, as when the first breath of winter checks the free, warm, vehement waters in their course, and chills them into ice. The climate had hardly bronzed him at all, and his wide, white forehead was without scar or mark. The always severely delicate outline of his profile was still more clearly chiseled; his mouth was now haughty and stern; his passionate dark eyes were now searching, calm, and generally refusing all guess at the thoughts or feelings within, and the dark shadow under them, with a line or two about his lips which his black, silky moustaches did not hide, spoke of his restless spirit and unquiet fate. It was the face of a man of wayward will and strong passions, but of waywardness that had cost him dear, and of passions that were chained down and iced perhaps forever.

"You have seen good service out there, De Vigne," began Sabretasche, to lighten the gloom which malgré nous was stealing upon us. "'Pon my word we feel quite proud of you. What a lion you have been, old fellow. We grudged you intensely to the Hussars."

De Vigne smiled.

"I looked a lion because I was among puppy dogs, Sabretasche. Yes, I saw good service, not so much, though, as I should have liked. Some of it was pretty sharp work, but we dawdled a whole year away at that little miserable Calcutta court; if it had not been for pig-sticking and the tigers I should never have borne it at all, but I got no end of spears, and I found sport in the jungles a good deal more like the real thing than in the preserves here, or even on the moors. Then we went up to a hill station, where there was nobody but an old judge, purblind, and a missionary or two, who had been bankrupt shoemakers or stonemasons, and taken to dispensing grace as a means of getting a few shillings from those discerning Christians who sent them out, firmly crediting their assurances that they feel 'specially called.' There the hill deer, and the ortolans, and a tiger or two, kept us going; and then we were ordered off to have a shy at the mountain rebels, and a pleasant life we led, hunting them. They fought magnificently, I must say. Ah! by Jove!" cried De Vigne, his eyes lighting up, "there at last I really lived. The constant presence of danger, the ceaseless necessity for vigilance, the free life, the sharp service, roused me up, and gave me a zest for existence which I thought I had lost forever."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" cried the Colonel. "You will have zest enough in it by-and-by. No man on the sunny side of forty has lost what he may not regain."

"Except where one false step has murdered pride and

periled honor, has clouded all the future, formed a barrier which there is no destroying, a clog which there is no casting from us," said De Vigne, with something of that stern sadness which he had tried to throw off him. But he roused himself again. "Well, Sabretasche, what have you been doing all these years? Flirting, buying pictures and painting them, setting the fashion, and criticising new singers, as usual, I suppose."

"Don't talk of the years!" cried Sabretasche, lifting his eyebrows. "If I see to-morrow I shall be nine-and-thirty. It is disagreeable to grow old; one begins to doubt one's attractions."

"You are young enough," laughed De Vigne; "and yet, I don't know, it is a popular fallacy that time counts by years. One is old according to the style of one's life, not the length of it."

"I heard Violet Molyneux tell you last night, Colonel, that you were in your second youth, and the first prime of manhood. So take comfort," said I, laughing.

He smiled too.

"Poor little fool!" he muttered, under his moustaches.

"Violet Molyneux—who is she?" asked De Vigne. "That's a new name to me. Is she a child of Lord Molyneux—Jockey Jack, as we used to call him?"

"Yes," I answered; "and a lovely creature she is. She's a fresh beauty, and a new love for Sabretasche, who, from a few calls from him, and a few books from his library, and a few canters down the Ride with him, is ready to think him perfection, and worships him most devoutly, especially since she came to his studio with her mamma this morning and saw his last painting—which you must see, by the way—of Esmeralda and Djali."

"Don't crack me up, Arthur," said Sabretasche, rather impatiently. "Jockey Jack has a daughter who knows

how to talk, and sings well enough to please *me*, (two especial miracles, as you can fancy, my dear De Vigne;) but, certainly, both her tongue and her thorax do their business unusually well, and she is very lovely to boot. What have I been doing, did you say? Leading just the same life I have led for the last eighteen or twenty years. Making love to scores of women and loving none, wasting my time over marble and canvas, heading a Hyde Park campaign, or directing a Richmond fête. Caramba! one gets tired of it."

"Why lead it, then?"

"Because none are any better. Do my scientific friends, who absorb their energies in classifying a fossil, encrinite; my parliamentary friends, who concentrate their energies in bribing the Unwashed; my philanthropic friends, who hoax the public, and get hoaxed themselves by every text-quoting thief who has the knack and the tact to touch up their weak points; my literary friends, who write to line portmanteaus; my celebrated friends, who work, and wear, and toil to get heart disease and three lines in history,—do these, any of them, enjoy themselves one whit the more; or fail to say with Solomon, 'Vanity of vanities—all is vanity'? Tell me so—show me so, and I will begin their life to-morrow. Our vocation is to amuse ourselves, and slay our fellow-creatures by way of intermediate pastime; and it is as good a one, for all I can see, as any other."

"To slay our fellow-creatures!" cried De Vigne. "Come, come, put it a little more gracefully. To fight like Britons—to die for our colors. Something a little more poetic and patriotic."

"Same thing, my dear De Vigne; only the wording different!"

"You like the same life as the Cid, Colonel," said I, smiling. "To eat daintily, sleep warmly, lie on cushions

without anybody to trouble you, and kill your game when the spirit moves you."

"And love most truly, and do my duty, as far as I see it, most faithfully? No, no, Arthur, that doesn't do for me at all; it's not in my rôle."

"You'll write on the Cid's grave," said De Vigne, "as Byron on Boatswain's,

In life the firmest friend,
The first to welcome, foremost to defend."

"Yes, indeed; and like him I may add:

I never had but one, and here he lies.

The Cid," said Sabretasche, drawing the dog's ears through his hands—"the Cid is the only thing that cares for me."

"For you, the adored of all women, the cher ami of all beauties, the 'good fellow' of every man worth knowing in town!" said De Vigne. "What do you mean by only having a dog to care for you? The world would never believe you."

"I mean what I say," answered Sabretasche. "Bon Dieu! how much does the world know of any of us?"

"Little enough," said De Vigne, "but it is always of those of whom it knows least that it will affect to know most; and the stranger you sit next at a dinner-party is ten to one far better acquainted with your business than you are yourself."

"Ah! isn't he?" said I. "That reminds me, Sabretasche, I heard from three different ladies the other day that you were engaged to Valencia Prie-Dieu, that you were certainly going to be married to Fanella de Vaux; and thirdly, that you, without the slightest doubt, were going to elope with Ascott's wife. I believe they mentioned the hour, and where you were going."

• “Well done for your morals, Sabretasche,” laughed De Vigne; “three women on your hands at the same time! How will you manage them all?”

“Good Heavens!” cried the Colonel, laughing. “Commend me to the ingenuity of women! With Val Prie-Dieu I danced twice at Almack’s, and that’s all, for she hasn’t two ideas, and I never waste my time on a stupid woman; no coiffure can make up to me for lack of brain under it. Miss de Vaux, I don’t think I know; I have a dim recollection of staying last autumn in the same house with a hideous large-boned filly of a girl, who went by that name. With my Lady Ascott, I plead guilty to mild flirtation; but, as she has red hair, is the most prudent of women, and Ascott is one of my best friends, and has many a time confided to me how thankful he would be to any Don Juan that rid him of his better-half, I should be about as likely to elope with your new mare. Fancy my supporting life, for a week only, in the proximity of red hair!”

“Then I may contradict the statements?”

“No. I never honor reports by denying them.”

“Quite right,” said De Vigne; “they die quickest of inanition. Feed them with denial, they thrive apace; neglect them, they perish of chagrin. We shall hear you are to marry—what is her name?—Violet Molyneux next?”

“Not I,” said Sabretasche; “at least you may *hear* it, but I shall live and die as I am now—alone!”

“Who would care for reports?” said De Vigne, breaking off the ash of his cheroot; “the whispers of idle mischief or industrious malice. For my part, I can as soon imagine a man taking heed of every tuft of dandelion that passes him in the air, or every petty insect that crawls beneath his feet, as taking note of the reports that buzz round his *career*. If they are false, of course he can afford to laugh

at them; if true, why the judgment of society is not so infallible that we must needs bow to it, but, quite the contrary, it is most apt to err: it judges from the outside, in utter ignorance of the motive powers and springs within. The purity of a whitened sepulcher may attract it—the errors and weaknesses of a warm and noble nature may win its unjust censure. It is always ready to condemn, never ready to extenuate; and those whom it ostracizes are often worth the most. Opinion decreed David and Brutus fools; Eldon a profligate; Columbus a dreamer and blasphemer; Leibnitz, Sheridan, Washington Irving, and a host of others, dunderheads. Report has never yet been a true index to merit; and I should as soon dream of heeding the purposeless buzz of flies on a midsummer day as the venom and gossip with which petty natures seek to sting one. Bah! how I hate all those petitesse and turmoils, those pitiful wheels within wheels, those arrows, hit for so trifling a vengeance yet barbed with such a poisoned head, those lowering jealousies and meannesses, that debasing atmosphere of scandals, and envies, and detractions, that spoil social life. Out campaigning, one is free from all that. It is action, it is reality; before the cannon's mouth men cannot stop to split straws; and with one's own life on a thread, one cannot stop to stoop and ruin another's character. I do not know how it is. I have read pretty widely, but philosophers never preached endurance to me as well as the grand eternal calm of nature, nor sermons humbled me like the sense of my own insignificance as I lay under the great cathedral of the sky, with its multitudinous worlds rolling on and on in their changeless course. A few months ago I was camping out to net ortolans; the night was so still, so clear! What night is like a tropical one! Round us was the dense stretch of the forests and jungles—no wind stirring the great palm

groves—no sound, except the cry of the hill deer, or the deep voice of a tiger far away—there was nothing stirring, except now and then an antelope flitting like a ghost across the clearing, and, over it all, those dark blue skies with the intense brilliance of the southern stars. On my life, as I lay there by our watch-fire alone, with my pipe, it struck me that, if we would let her, Nature would be a truer teacher than theories or homilies. Human life seems so small beside the vast life of universal creation. The calm grand silence of the worlds going on in their noiseless path rebukes our own feverishness, our fretful passions, our ambitions, so arrogant, and yet so petty. We who fancy that the eyes of all the universe are on us, that we are the sole love and charge of its Creator, feel what ephemera we are in the giant scale of existence; what countless myriads of such as we have been swept from their place out of sight, and not a law of the spheres around been stirred, not a moment's pause been caused in the silent march of creation. Under men's tutelage I grow impatient and irritated. What gage have I that they know one bit better than I? They rouse me into questioning their dogmas, into penetrating their mysteries, into searching out and proving the nullity of the truths they assume for granted; but under the treaching of Nature I am silent. I recognize my own inferiority. I grow ashamed of my own weaknesses, my pride, my lack of charity and tolerance. Have not you often felt the same?"

"Yes," answered Sabretasche. "A wayside flower, a sunny savanna, a rose-hued Mediterranean sunrise, even a little bit of lichen on a stone in the Campagna, has taught one truer lessons than are taught in the forum or the pulpit. Man sees so little of his fellow-man; he is so ready to condemn, so slow to sympathize with him, that, if he attempt to teach, he is far more apt to irritate than aid; whereas,

to the voices of flowers, and sunlight, and midnight stars, the bluntest sense can hardly fail to listen, and they speak in a universal tongue, whose cadence is translatable alike to the Indian in his primeval woods and the civilized savant in his scientific study."

"But one is apt to lose sight of Nature in the hurry and conflict of actual every-day social life. Standing alone under the shadow of the Alps, a man learns and feels his own utter insignificance; but back again in the world, the first line of a favorable review, the first hurrah of an admiring constituency, the first applause that feeds his ear in the world he lives in, will give him back his self-appreciation, and he will find it hard not to take himself at the high gauge that others take him, and not to fancy himself of the importance to the universe that he naturally is to the clique to which he belongs. That is partly why I was unwilling to leave campaigning. There the jungle and the stars took me in hand, and there, many a night by my camp-fire, with my cheroot or my pipe in my mouth, I would listen to them, though God knows whether I am the better for it. Here, on the contrary, men will be prating at me, and I shall chafe at them, and it will be a wonder if I do not kick out at some of them. I am impatient, you know; my guerrilla life suited me better than my fashionable one."

"You are too good for it all the same," said Sabretasche; "and if you should put the kicking process into execution, it will be a little wholesome chastisement for them, and a little sanitary exertion for you. Jungles and planets are grander and truer, sans doute, but Johannisberger and society are equally good for men in their way, and, besides—they are very pleasant!"

"Your acme of praise, Sabretasche," laughed De Vigne. "I agree with you that human nature is, after all, the best

book we can learn, only the study is irritating, and one sees so much en noir there, that if we look too long we are apt to spoil our eyes for daylight, or to fling away our lexicon, with a curse upon it for deceiving us."

"The best way, after all," said the Colonel, with a cross between a yawn and a sigh, "is not to take it au sérieux, or make anything a study. Men and women are marionettes; the best way is to learn the tricks of their wires and strings, and make them perform, at our will, tragedy, comedy, farce, whatever pleases our mood. To be sure, one sometimes has a penalty to pay for learning to manage the puppets, as Charles Nodier found when he was taught to make Polichinelle talk upon the Boulevards; but human life is a kaleidoscope, with which the wise man amuses himself; it has pretty pictures for the eye, if you know how to shake them up, and as for analyzing it, pulling it to pieces for being only bits of cork and burnt glass, and quarreling with it for being trumpery instead of bon& side brilliants—cui bono?—you won't make it any better."

"Possibly; but I shall not be taken in by it."

"My dear fellow, I think the time when we *are* taken in by it is the happiest part of our lives."

"Maybe. His drum is no pleasure to a boy after he has broken it, and found the music is empty wind, with no mystery about it whatever. I say, what is your clock? Am I not keeping you fellows from some engagement or other?"

"None at all," answered Sabretasche, "and you will just sit where you are for the next four hours. Give me another cheroot, and take some more cognac: it is the true thing; I brought it from France myself. Is it likely we shall let you off early after an eight years' absence?"

We did not let him off early; and all the small hours *had* chimed before we had done talking over our cheroots,

with the fire burning brightly in the Colonel's luxurious room, and the Cid lying full-length between us, with his muzzle between his fore-pads, while De Vigne told us tales of his Indian campaign that roused even tired and listless Sabretasche, and fired my blood like the war-note of Boot and the Long Roll, or the trumpet-call of Saddle!

PART THE EIGHTH.

I.

SABRETASCHE, HAVING MOWED DOWN MANY FLOWERS, DETERMINES TO SPARE ONE VIOLET.

FROM the hour he left her in the vestry at Vigne church, De Vigne had never seen the woman who, by law, stood branded as his wife. His fiery love changed into most bitter loathing, and the hate wherewith he hated her was far greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. How could it be otherwise? How could any man so fiery in his impulses, so vehement in his passions, change to anything but deadliest hate toward the woman who had outwitted and entrapped him, outraged his honor, shivered his pride, insulted him so openly, revenged herself so cruelly, and shaped her vengeance in a form which would press upon him a dead and ice-cold weight to his grave—which would strike from his path all the natural joys and aspirations that bloom so brightly for a man so young, and stretch over his whole existence a shadow all the blacker that its giant upas-tree sprang from the forgotten seed of a boyish folly? He left her at the church, and swore never to touch even her hand again. Passion changed to ab-

horrence, and the girl who had charmed and intoxicated him in his boyhood with the simply sensuous beauties of face and form, filled him only with loathing and disgust when he thought of her bearing his own name, holding his own honor; when he saw her—coarse, cruel, ill born, ill bred, the pollution of her past life vainly covered with the varnish of society, the mud of the gutter gleaming hideously through the cosmetique of the actress; the vulgar vengefulness of her original nature standing out in its true colors; every taste of hers alien to his; every chord of her mind and thoughts at discord with his own; all the coarse attractions that had once charmed him so madly now revolting him from her;—and seeing her thus, knew that till one or other was in the grave this woman was his WIFE. Remorse, too, was added to the curse of his marriage. His mother, who loved him so tenderly, whom he loved so well—the one friend on whom he could rely, the one adviser in whom he, reserved and impatient of control, was alone able to confide—his mother had died of that fatal blow which struck at the root of her son's peace and honor. She had been for some years a victim of heart disease, though she had never allowed De Vigne to be told of the frail tenure on which she held her life; that any sudden emotion or over-excitement might at any time be her death-blow, was only known to herself and her physician, and she kept her secret with that silent heroism of which here and there women are found capable. As De Vigne left the church, Sabretasche lifted her up in what he believed to be a fainting fit, but it was a swoon, from which she never awoke, and her son was left to bear his curse alone.

I have seen men writhing in their death agony, I have seen women stretched across the lifeless body of their lover on the battle-field where he fell, I have seen the anguish

and the torture of human souls cooped up by shoals in hospital sick-wards, I have seen mortal suffering in almost all its phases—and they are varied and pitiful enough, God knows!—but I never saw any so silent and yet so terrible as De Vigne's, when we hurried after him up to town to tell him of his double grief. When we found him, the Trefusis's revenge had done its work upon him; lengthened years would not have quenched the life, and light, and youth, as the remorse, the humiliation, the conflicting passions at war within him had already done. The tidings we brought, crowned the anguish that had entered into his life. On my life, gently as Sabretasche broke it to him, I thought it would have killed him. His lips turned gray as stone, he staggered like a drunken man, and would have fallen where he stood if I had not held him up.

"My God! and I have murdered her!"—That was all he said. Under what anguish his strong heart reeled, and his iron pride bowed in his night watches beside the lifeless form of the mother whose love for him had killed her, no one knew. He was alone in his passionate and unspoken sorrow, and I could only guess by my knowledge of him how bitterly his deep affections suffered, how wildly he cursed the wayward passions that had wrought his ruin, how long and silently the vulture of remorse gnawed his heart away, with the haunting memory of his folly and its fruit.

He laid his mother under one of the giant elms of Vigne, with violets and lilies growing over her pure white headstone; and, but for the high courage and strong manhood in him, would have loaded one of his pistols and been buried there beside her, so bitter was his anguish at the mad, headstrong passion which had given the death-blow to her life and his own peace.

A month afterward he exchanged into the —th Hussars,

and sailed for Scinde. He saw none of his old companions and acquaintance, save the Colonel and myself; he shunned all who had been witnesses of his marriage, all who knew of the stain upon his name, all who had even heard of the folly into which his own wayward will had hurried him. It is easy to bear the contempt and censure of the world when we are happy, and defiance of its laws brings fame or rapture; but its sneer and its supercilious smiles may be hard even to a brave man to bear, when the world has cause to call him fool, when it can triumph in vaunting its own superior penetration, in recalling its own wise prophecies of his fall, and in compelling him to make the most difficult of all confessions to a proud heart—"I was wrong!"

De Vigne sailed for India, the hand of his double sorrow heavy upon him. He commissioned Sabretasche to make arrangements with the Trefusis, but all that the Colonel, consummate man of the world though he was, could do, was to exact that she should receive an allowance of three thousand a year, (if she would have demanded less, which I do not suppose she would, old Fantyre, who was eternally at her elbow, would not have permitted her,) on condition that she never came to England. The Trefusis accepted it, possibly because she knew the law would not give her so much, and went to Paris and the Bads, leading a pleasant life enough, I doubt not, but careful to make it far too proper a one—outwardly, at the least—to give him any chance of a divorce. Separated from him at the church, she was still legally his wife, and she printed "Mrs. De Vigne" on her cards, and held herself as such. By what miracle of metamorphosis, by what agency, assistance, or wonderful self-education Lucy Davis had been enabled to change herself into Constance Trefusis, we knew not then, nor till long afterward. That De Vigne had not recognized in the haughty and handsome protégée of Lady Fantyre

the forward young milliner of Frestonhills, who had almost entirely slipped from his memory, was not astonishing. In those eight years the unformed girl of seventeen had changed into the maturer and finer beauty of five-and-twenty: she had grown taller, her form had developed, fashion, dress, and taste lent her beauty a thousand aids unknown to her in her earlier days of mingled boldness and gaucherie. It was not wonderful that, having forgotten Lucy Davis, and almost all connected with her, in the rapid whirl of life into which he had plunged, and the different loves which had chased themselves in and out of his wayward fancy, he should fail to recognize her as Constance Trefusis, in so utterly different a sphere, so entirely altered in feature, manner, appearance, that not a single trace remained to recall her to him; though how she had so metamorphosed herself I used to think over in amazement many and many a time, never able to find out a solution.

De Vigne returned home to resume the social life he had so suddenly snapped asunder. To careless eyes he was much the same; as amusing a companion at the mess-table; as keen-sighted and witty a talker in that most fastidious of circles, the clubs; as admired by women, despite that his admiration of them had merged into sarcasm at and indifference to them; but *I* felt that the whole man in him was changed. Reserved, skeptical of all truth and of all worth, his generous trust changed to chill suspicion, his fiery impetuosity chained down under a semblance of icy firmness, his strong passions held down under an iron curb, the treachery of which he had been the victim seemed to have wholly altered his frank, warm, cordial nature. He was fond of Curly (who had just changed from the Coldstreams to the lieutenant-colonelcy of the —th Fusiliers, as lazy, sweet-tempered, fair-haired a young Adonis as ever) from

early association; he liked me; he liked Sabretasche immensely; he liked as acquaintances several men and one or two women, but to rouse any more cordial feeling, to interest him more warmly, seemed impossible; in truth, the future was a blank to him, for though he would not have allowed it, and possibly did not know it, De Vigne was not a man to live without sympathy or affection, and the unconscious thirst to be loved and understood made a void in him which he felt, though he guessed not its cause.

"The fact is," said Curly to me, as we were riding down Piccadilly to the Park, "both the Colonel and De Vigne have done themselves up too soon. They go on in that kill joy nil admirari system till they take no pleasure in anything. I'm blasé enough, goodness knows, and some things bore me infernally; but there is plenty of fun in life if you only go the way to work to find it. De Vigne, poor fellow! is as frozen up by this confounded miserable més-alliance as the ships in the Arctic Seas. It will take some tremendous impetus, some wonderful force, to thaw him out of it again. It would do him a world of good to fall in love again, but he won't, the Marble Arch would be as easy to ignite; and then if it were with a girl in his own rank, which it would be, as he'd be dead certain to take the exact contrary to the Trefusis, there would be the very devil to pay, wouldn't there? Ah, by Jove, here he is! Beautiful creature, that mare of his is—three parts thorough-bred; and just look at her wild eye. How are you, De Vigne? My dear fellow, how religious you make me every time I come across you! I pronounce a Benedicite on the Horse Guards for ordering the —th home!"

"Very kind of you, Curly," laughed De Vigne, "but I'm not sure I re-echo your thanksgiving. A gallop in the cool night through the jungle is preferable to pacing up and down the Ride yonder."

"Wait till the Ride's full," replied Curly, "with all the gouty wits, and the dandy politicians, and the amazoned belles, and the intensely got-up stockbrokers, and the immensely showy livery-stable hacks, who would go so delightfully if they weren't, *par hasard*, broken-winded, or knock-kneed by way of change. Wait till the season, my good fellow—till you drink Seltzer as thirstily as a tired hound drinks water, till you spend the sweet hours of the summer nights crushed up on the stairs of Eaton Square or May Fair, till you waste a couple of hundred giving a Clarendon dinner to men and women who, having eaten your Strasbourg pâtés, drive away to demolish your character—wait till the season, and *then* you'll admit the superiority of enjoyment to be found in town instead of in campaigning. There's nobody in town worth seeing yet, except, indeed, Violet Molyneux."

"Whom I have not seen," said De Vigne; "but I will go and call there—Lowndes Square, isn't it?—for I used to know her mother very well; an eminently religious flirt, I remember, who made an assignation one day and prayed for forgiveness for it at vespers the next evening. I have a curiosity to see this young lady, because she has Sabretasche's good word."

"A good word, by-the-by," laughed Curly, "that's apt to do them as much damage in one way as his condemnation does in another. He has begun to go about Violet, in his soft way, as he's gone about after hundreds of women, just for all the world as one of those beautiful boa-constrictors uncurls itself from a tree, and hovers over a poor little bird and fascinates it up to its death. She little knows what a desperate Lothario he is. I wonder if he'll ever marry?"

"I wonder if you'll ever hang yourself, Curly?" said De Vigne, dryly. "Neither you nor he will do either as long

as you are sane; but both of you may become candidates for Hanwell before you die, for anything I can tell."

"Oh! I hope not," cried Curly, piteously. "They'll cut off my hair, you know, and, like Samson, my strength (of conquest) lies in my locks, and my Delilahs wouldn't look at me without them. I'm one of the best-looking men in the service, but can't stand your statuesque style. There's nothing so telling for features that can bear it, but very few men's can, you know."

"Good Heavens! Curly, hold your tongue," cried De Vigne. "I cut my hair for comfort, not for effect, thank God!"

"Well, it *has* effect, if you don't," persisted Curly, who, according to his own account, gave four hours a day to his morning toilette. "I say, shall we go and call on the Molyneux now? May as well, eh? There's no news in the papers, and there's sure to be nobody decent in the Park."

"Comme vous voudrez?" said De Vigne, turning round his mare's head. "I think morning calls one of our greatest social evils, for they fritter more time away than they're worth; and just when you have got into a full swing of a little better discourse, it is time to give place to somebody else and make your exit."

"I, au contraire, think them unspeakably pleasant," responded Curly. "It kills the hour, (not but that is one of Sabretasche's difficulties, never of mine;) you learn all the news, you enjoy the luxury of hearing one best friend scandalize and cut up another of your dear acquaintances; and you can win Lady A.'s love for life by revealing to her the strictly private secret Mrs. B. has just confided to you, under a solemn seal of silence, relative to Miss C. Bless you, my dear fellow, society wouldn't half go on; there wouldn't be a tithe of the on dits sown that are necessary to the welfare and comfort of society, if it were not for that blessed institution of morning calls."

"That reminds me," said De Vigne; "yesterday, when I was calling on the Bovilles, (they are a detestable set, but Ned Boville, of the Artillery, asked me to see his family when I came home, and tell them about him,) I was sitting in the inner drawing-room, chatting with Madame, when Crowndiamonds's tilbury drove up. The two girls thought nobody was in the back room as they sat in the front—they had that moment come in from riding—and the elder sister whispered to the little one, who goes in for the kitten style and does it very badly, 'Fanny, there's Lord Crowndiamonds; go and be doing something interesting.' Whereupon Miss Fanny started up and knelt gracefully on the hearth-rug, and began tickling a spaniel and a pup, with enchanting naïveté and sweet childish laughter, making such a delicious tableau that Crowndiamonds was quite struck, I could see, when she sprang up, looking caught, and her elder apologized for 'silly little Fanny's nonsense.'"

"How intensely good!" shouted Curly.

"Good?" said De Vigne, bitterly. "I call it intensely BAD, to see girls of eighteen and twenty such artful actresses; to know that they are bred up in such rank artificiality that every gesture is studied, every word weighed, every action that looks natural, or frank, or fresh, has been prearranged beforehand, to look interesting and trap the unwary. They cry out that the nineteenth century men have lost all the strong stuff that made 'Pro patria' the rallying cry of the Greeks and Romans, that made Socrates choose death rather than the dishonor of flight, and the Gracchi stand till now synonyms of perfect manhood. I don't think we have; but if we had it would scarcely be matter of wonder, when women like these, fed on artifice, cramped with conventionality, and taught politic lies from

their cradles, are the English wives, and mothers, and sisters whom it is British custom to hold up as profitable standards and wholesome reproofs to the rest of European ladies!"

"The root of it is, as I read somewhere or other," said Curly, "that there are no girls now, they are all young ladies."

"As like one another," said De Vigne, "as the hips and haws on the hedges, or the links in my Albert chain. Educated within the stiff chevaux-de-frise of etiquette, they are taught to repress every natural demonstration or feeling, and to follow one another in Indian file along the same narrow and beaten track. They are all formed alike in one artificial mould, all educated alike in the same clap-trap and superficiality. Pretty heads, with nothing in them; pretty hands, that can at best snip out broderie; pretty voices, that lisp out 'Yes' and 'No,' agree with the last speaker, if he be also the most eligible match, and dare enunciate no opinion of their own. They give plenty for the eye, not a grain for the mind; and the heart may look forever before it finds any food in their affections, measured by a foot-rule, and limited by what is 'womanly,' i.e., frozen and conventional. They are ironed down into one unaffected surface, which no natural impulse must ever venture to crumple or disturb; and where a girl dares to be frank, and free, and true, her sisterhood forthwith stone her, and decree her 'bold' and 'forward.' The few good-hearted ones make constant wives and patient mothers, but in those few chained to the follies of their drawing-room, or the dull domesticities of their nursery, what man finds a companion? And if he ever look for anything in them to think his thoughts, to sympathize in his graver studies, to help him on his better road; to comprehend, to refine, to exalt his intellect, or his aims, God help him!"

"Ah," said Curly, "if ever I should meet with that dear

little thing you mention, who would dare to emancipate herself, and be demonstrative and unartificial, I'm perfectly certain I should fall in love with her, and therefore I do hope and trust I may never come across the miracle, for it is a horrid bore to be in love; I infinitely prefer receiving unlimited worship as I do now, and giving no more than just warms me up agreeably."

"Don't come in here, then, Curly," said I, as we turned into Lowndes Square, "for, according to report, the Hon. Vy is both demonstrative and unartificial."

"That is to say, an actress a little better up in her rôle than her compeers, who, like Rachel, has the superior skill to make art seem nature," said De Vigne, with a dash of that bitterness which lay hidden under his courteous calm or his witty jest; sure result of deception and treachery on an originally frank and unsuspecting nature.

Lady Molyneux was at home, a rare thing for that restless mosaic of religion and fashion, of decided "ton" and pronounced "piety;" and at home we found her, chatting with one of her beloved spiritual brothers, the Bishop of Campanile, a most pleasant bon viveur, by no means a Saint Anthony on the score of earthly temptations, while in a low chair, exquisitely dressed, (I confess to a weakness for pretty toilettes for ladies, beauty unadorned, &c. is bosh and twaddle,) her radiant eyes sparkling, her graceful figure and her lovely face all instinct with life and animation, sat Violet Molyneux talking to Sabretasche, who was listening to her with an air of half indolent amusement, and magnetizing her with the soft, lustrous gaze of his mournful eyes, that had wound their way into so many women's love.

Lady Molyneux welcomed us all charmingly. She was quite made of milk of roses, that dear woman; there was a shadow of impatience in her daughter's tell-tale eyes at

having her talk interrupted, but of course she was too much of a lady to show it, and the Colonel, who had a wonderful knack of monopolizing a woman quietly, did not give up his seat, and soon resumed his discussion with her, which it seems was on the poets of the present day; no very promising theme, you will say, as those gentlemen are more provocative of Billingsgate anathemas, generally speaking, than of anything else.

"What do you think of the 'Ideals of the Lotus and the Lily?'" asked Violet of De Vigne, referring to the book they were discussing, the last wild-brained and mystical nonsense that had issued from the imaginations of the pet rhymers of the day.

"I cannot say I think much," smiled De Vigne. "To read that man's works one wants a dictionary of all his unintelligible jargon, his 'double-barreled adjectives,' his purposely obscured meanings. I suppose he fancies chiar'oscuro the best tone for paintings, that he draws his word-pictures in such densely dark style that our eyes have to grow, cat-like, used to the demi-lumière before we can even guess at the meaning of the shapes that lie groveling in it, which, when we do drag them up into daylight, turn out voiceless and valueless shadows not worth the disemboweling."

"All that is treason here, De Vigne," said Sabrotesche, with a mischievous smile. "Miss Molyneux is the patron and champion of everything visionary, high-wrought, and unintelligible to us ordinary mortals."

"Comme vous me taquinez!" cried Violet, indignantly. She was by this time wonderfully good friends with the Colonel. "I don't think any more than you do that everybody who dashes down the phantasies of his seething brain has a right to consider himself a poet, nor that every lover who scribbles a few halting stanzas to his airy

fairy Lilian has a right to consider himself as one of the elect of genius."

"Just so; boys learn the poetry of the day because it helps them to write their love-letters, and vaunts the mystical and misunderstood sorrows on which young fellows in the Werther period of life are so fond of pluming themselves," said De Vigne. "The polite 'go to the deuce!' these new rhymesters say to everybody not exactly their own way of thinking; the way in which they curse in dithyrambics all who indulge in the luxury of a little common sense, are what irritate me. They waste in tears and rhymes the hours they should give to study and reverent analysis of greater minds that have come and gone before them. They complain of themselves as martyrs to the world's neglect, when they have not done a single thing to attract the world's applause. Yet these raving individuals, 'sad only for wantonness,' strangely please dreamy young ladies and gentlemen ignorant of the true meaning, sorrows, and burdens of this 'work-a-day world.'"

Violet made him a graceful *révérence*.

"Thank you. Is that a hit at me? It does not strike home, if it is, because my worst enemies could never say I was dreamy, though they may call me—what is it, high-wrought?" And she glanced at Sabretasche, who gave it back with as tender and a more earnest look than even he, faithless Lauzun though he was, often gave women. "But you philosophers forget," went on the young lady, energetically, "that feeling—romance, as you are pleased to call it—has been the germ and nurse of all great writers. The swan must suffer before it sings. Did not his child love inspire Dante? The eyes of Beatrice were the guiding stars of his genius. Would Petrarch have been all he is but for the '*amore veementissimo ma unico ed onesto*'? Did not his passion for Mary Chaworth have its influence

for life upon the character and the writings of Byron? And was not Leonora d'Este to Tasso what Diana's kiss was to Endymion?"

"And was not the domestic misery of Milton's married life the inspiration of that glorious tirade upon women in Adam's magnificent speech?" asked Sabretasche, mischievously; "and but for Anne Hathaway, might we have ever had that fiery oration of Posthumus:

Even to vice
They are not constant; but are changing still
One vice, but of a minute old, for one
Not half so old as that?"

"Some better woman, then, monsieur, taught him," cried Violet, hotly, "that from women's eyes

Sparkles still the right Promethean fire.
They are the books, the arts, the academes
That show, contain, and nourish all the world."

Sabretasche bowed his head in acknowledgment of defeat.

"You have conquered me, as Rosaline conquered Byron!"

He said the words as he had said such things to scores of women as lovely as Violet Molyneux; from anybody else she would have taken them at their value; at the Colonel's glance her eyes flashed and her color deepened.

"But don't you think, Miss Molyneux," suggested De Vigne, quietly, "that when Tasso languished in Ferrara dungeons, he must have wished he had never seen the Este family? Don't you fancy that Gemma Donati must have rather canceled Dante's good opinion of the beau sexe, and that his 'wife, of savage temper,' (not to mention Beatrice's infidelity to him and marriage with Simon de Bardi, which sinks her down to the usual stamp of coquet-

tish and bewitching young ladies, with enough of the paternal Portinari prudence in her to take a better match than the orphan Alighieri,) may have been bitter tonics, rather than sweet balm to his genius? And as for Byron—well! Miss Millbanks was rather a thorn in his side, wasn't she? And with all the romance in the world, I think, when he called on Mrs. Musters, he must have thought he had been rather a fool. What do you say?"

"I say, Major de Vigne," responded Violet, solemnly, "that you have not a trace, not a particle, not an infinitesimal germ of romance."

"Thank Heaven—no!" said De Vigne, with a laugh.

I doubt, though, if the laugh was heartfelt. I dare say he thought of the time when romance was hot and strong in him, and trust and faith strong too.

"I pity you then! Where I think you skeptical men err so much," said Violet, turning her brilliant eyes on Sabretasche, "is in confounding false and true, good and bad, feeling with sentiment, genius with pretension. The same lash which you use justly on the ass in a lion's skin, you use most *unjustly* on the real king of the forest, whose majesty is no usurpation, and strength no make-believe. Why at one sweep condemn the expression of unusual feeling as sentiment simply, because it is unusual? Deep feeling *is* rare; but it does not follow that on *that* account it is unreal. You tread on a thousand ordinary flowers—daisies, buttercups, cowslips, anemones—in an every-day walk; you snap off roses, heliotropes, magnolias, fuschias; they are all fair, all full of life; but out of all the Flora, there is only one sensitive plant that shrinks and trembles at your touch. Yet, though the sensitive plant is organized so far more tenderly, it is no artificial offspring of mechanism, but as fresh, and real, and living a thing as any of the others!"

De Vigne and Curly were chatting with Lady Molyneux, whose bishop had taken his congé. Sabretasche still sat by Violet, a little apart, playing with her Skye Cupidon's ears.

"I believe you," he said, gently; "there *are* sensitive plants, though they are very few, so fresh, and real, and fair, that it is a sin they should ever have to shiver in rude hands, and learn to bend with the world's breath. But live as long as we have, and you will know that the deep feeling of which you are thinking is never found in unison with the poetic and driveling sentiment we ridicule. Boys' sorrows vent themselves in words—men's griefs are voiceless. If ever you feel—pray God you never may, for it comes only to destroy—the fierce and far-rooted passion of vital suffering, you will find that it may sear, wither, wear out life and light, but that it will never seek solace in confidence, never *lament itself*, but rather hug its torture closer, as the Spartan child hugged the fierce wolf-fangs. You will find the difference between the fictitious sorrows which run abroad proclaiming their own wrongs, and the grief which lies next the heart night and day; and, like the iron cross of the Romish priest, eats it slowly, but none the less surely, away."

They were strange words to come from gay, brilliant, nonchalant Vivian Sabretasche! Violet looked at him in surprise, and her laughing eyes grew sad and dimmed. He had forgotten for the moment where he was; at her earnest gaze he roused himself with the faintest tinge of color on his expressive face.

"Miss Molyneux, I am going to ask you to do me a most intense kindness; would you mind singing me Hullah's 'Three Fishers?' I declare to you it has haunted me ever since I heard you sing it on Tuesday night; and it is so seldom I hear any music that is not either a bawl or a

screech—rarely, indeed, anything that *satisfies* me as your songs do.”

She sprang up joyously. “Oh yes, I will sing it if you will sing *me* those glorious Italian songs of yours. Do you know I was dreadfully afraid of singing before you first of all. Mamma told me you were so terribly fastidious, and even found fault with Jenny Lind.”

“Because I remembered Malibran. But I find no fault with you; your voice is very sweet, of a very full compass, and, with a very little more tuition, would be perfect.”

“I am so glad it pleases you!” cried the young belle. “Major De Vigne, if you have no romance, I am quite sure you cannot care for music, so I give you full leave to talk to mamma as loudly as ever you like. I am going to sing only to Colonel Sabretasche.”

Colonel Sabretasche looked half pleased, half amused at the distinction accorded to him, and followed her to the back drawing-room, where he leaned on the piano, looking down upon her, while Violet sang—sang with one of those best gifts of nature and cultivation, a clear, bell-like, melodious voice, highly tutored, and as flexible and free as the gushing song of a mavis in spring-time, telling out its gladness under the heavy hawthorn boughs. I am not sure whether her mother was best pleased or not at that musical tête-à-tête, for Sabretasche had a universal reputation as a most unscrupulous flirt, and Lady Molyneux knew his character—at least, the character given him in his circle—too well to think he was likely to be doing any more than playing with Violet as the most attractive beauty in town. But then, again, his word was almost law in all matters of taste. He could injure Violet irretrievably by a depreciating criticism, and could make her of tenfold more marketable value by an approving word, for there were numbers of men at the clubs who moulded themselves by his dictum.

So Lady Molyneux let them alone, having fully determined to marry her child either to his Grace of Regalia, a young fellow of four-and-twenty, or to Cavendish Grey, a minister and a millionaire, before the coming season was over and gone.

I don't suppose she noticed Violet drawing out a large bunch of her floral namesakes from a Bohemian glass full of them, and lifting them up for Sabretasche to scent.

"Are they not delicious? They remind me of dear old Corallyne, when I used to gather them out of the fresh damp moss. Do you know Kerry, Colonel Sabretasche? No? Oh, you should go there; it is so beautiful, with its blue lakes, and its wild mountains, and its green, fragrant woodlands."

"I should like it, I dare say," said Sabretasche, smiling, "with you for my guide. I want some added charm now to give 'greenness to the grass and glory to the flower.' Once I enjoyed them for themselves, as you do; but as one gets on in life there is too silent a rebuke in nature for us to enjoy it unrestrainedly. Is Lord Molyneux's estate in Kerry?"

"Don't call it an estate," laughed Violet; "it always amuses me so when I see it put down in the peerage. It is only miles and miles of moorland, with nothing growing on it but tangled wood and glorious wild-flowers. There are one or two cabins with inhabitants like kelpies. The house has been, perhaps, very grand when all we Irish were kings, and you Sassenachs, Roman slaves; but at the present moment, having lost three-quarters of its roof and nine-tenths of its timbers, having rats, and owls, and ghosts innumerable, no windows, and no furniture, you would probably think it more picturesque than comfortable, and feel more inclined to paint it than to live in it."

"But *you* lived in it?"

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"Ah! when I was a child; but it was a little better then. There was a comfortable room or two in it, and I was very happy there with my favorite governess and my little rough pony, when papa and mamma were up here or in Paris, and left us to ourselves in Corallyne. I wonder if I shall ever be as happy as I was there?"

"You are very happy here," said Sabretasche, with a sort of pity for the joyous-hearted, fair, fresh Violet, to whom sorrow was yet but a name.

"Happy? Oh, yes; I enjoy myself, and I am always light-hearted; but I have things to annoy me here; the artifices and frivolity of the society that we are constantly in worry me. I want to say always what I think, and nobody seems to do it in the world."

"The world would be in hot water if they did. But pray speak it to me."

"I always do—I could not do otherwise," answered Violet, innocently. "Yes, I enjoy London life. I like the whirl, the excitement, the intellectual discussion, the wide-awake, vivid, *real* life men lead here. I should enjoy it entirely if I did not see too many hard, cruel, worn faces under the fair smiling masks."

"Pauvre enfant!" murmured Sabretasche. "Do you suppose there are *any* light hearts under the dominoes at a bal masqué?"

Violet looked at him earnestly:

"*Yours* is not a light one?"

"Mine!" echoed the Colonel, with a strangely melancholy intonation; then he laughed his gay soft laugh. "If it is not, mademoiselle, you are the first who had penetration enough to find it out. I am quôteur of amusement in general to all my friends. There is De Vigne going, and so must I. I shall not thank you for your songs."

"No, don't," said Violet, warmly. "I am so tired of

meaningless thanks and vapid compliments. You would not have asked me to sing if you had not wished to hear me, for I know that on principle you never bore yourself."

"Never," replied Sabretasche, in his usual indolent tone. "No one is worth such a self-sacrifice."

"Not even I?" asked Violet, saucily raising her eyebrows.

"To suppose such a case, I must first imagine you boring me, which just at present is an hypothesis *not* to be imagined by any stretch of poetic fancy," laughed Sabretasche, as he held out his hand to bid her good morning.

She held the violets up to him:

"You have forgotten the flowers?"

"May I have them?" asked Sabretasche, softly, with one of those long tender glances, in which his lengthened experience in that mysterious book, a woman's heart, had perfected him.

She gave them to him with a bright flush and smile. He slipped them hastily into the breast of his waistcoat, and came forward to Lady Molyneux.

"Violet, my love," began her mother, as the door closed on us, "Colonel Sabretasche comes here a great deal; I wish you would not be quite so—quite so—expansive with him."

"Expansive!" repeated Violet, in sheer astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say, my dear Violet," repeated the Viscountess, the milk of roses turning a little sour. "You treat him quite as familiarly as if he were your brother or your lover. You need not color, I don't say he *is* the last; God forbid he should be, with his principles and his well-known character! You really run after him. I know he makes himself agreeable to you, but so, as every one will tell you, he has done for the last twenty years to any pretty

woman that came across his path; and your speech to his friend De Vigne, about 'singing *only* to Colonel Sabretasche,' was not alone unmaidenly, it was absurd."

"How so?" said Miss Vy, the color hot in her cheeks. "I did not sing to the others, I only cared for him to hear it and like it."

"It was all very well for him to hear it and like it," replied my lady, irritably—prominent piety has a queer knack of souring the temper—"his extreme fastidiousness makes his good word well worth having; the best way to make your opinion of value in society is to admire nothing, as he does. But, at the same time, it is a dear way of gaining his applause to keep all other men in the background while you are flirting with him. Before you saw him you liked Regalia, and Killury, and plenty of others, well enough; now you really attend to no one else if Colonel Sabretasche chance to be in the room."

"Because I see their inferiority to him," interrupted Violet, vehemently. "Their talk is cancons, compliments, and sentiment; his is talent, intellect, and sense. All they can do is to ride, and waltz, and smoke; he has the genius of an artist, whether in painting, sculpture, or music. They think they please me by vapid flattery; he knows better. They are one's subjects, he is one's master!"

Lady Molyneux was seriously appalled by such an outburst. She raised her eyebrows sarcastically:

"You admire Vivian Sabretasche very much, Violet?"

"Yes," said Violet, fervently; "with all my soul."

"I should not advise you to say so, my dear."

"Why not? it is the truth."

"Few truths can be spoken," replied the eminently religious, fashionable lady, coldly. "Why you had better not proclaim your very Quixotic admiration for Sabretasche is, because he bears as bad a character for morality

as he bears a good one for talent and fashion. What his life has been every one knows pretty well: he is a most unprincipled libertine, and if you proclaim the interest you feel in him just because he has chatted with you, and sent you flowers, and praised your singing, you will be classed with the scores of pretty young girls whom he has made love to and left. No one ever dreams of expecting anything serious of him; he is the last man in the universe to marry, but a flirtation with him may very greatly injure your prospects——”

“Oh! mamma, pray don’t!” said Violet, with a dash of contemptuous hauteur. “I am so sick of those words; they are so lowering, so pitiful, so conventional, making a market of one’s self and one’s best affections. I cannot bear to hear you speak so. I admire Colonel Sabretasche; I could not cease to admire him for anything other people might say; and it is sacrilege to me to have a friend, yet listen to the world’s opinion of him, or discard him for anything society might whisper against him; if untrue, it is beneath both his and your attention; if true, he needs all the more your defense and your fidelity. As to his being—to his meaning—anything ‘serious,’” said Violet, with the color very hot in her bright, upraised face, “there is no question of that; he is very kind to me, his notice is honor to any one; but I would rather die than learn to look upon him as a speculation, or class him with all those foolish men who circle round me and try to buy me with their settlements. As to his life, he has led the same life as most men, probably; a little more openly, perhaps, than those more prudent may do; but you need only look in his eyes to see whether anything base or cruel can attach itself to him.”

Her mother sighed and sneered, and smiled unpleasantly.

"My love, the way you talk is too absurd, and a great deal too forward for me to condescend to argue with you. You forget yourself strangely; if you are not more quiet and circumspect you will be denounced—and very justly, too—as the worst ton. How is it possible for a girl of nineteen to judge of the character of a man of forty, a blasé man of the world, who was one of the greatest roués about town while she was a little child in the nursery? It is too ridiculous! But it is getting late; go and dress for dinner. The dear bishop, and Cavendish Grey, and Killury will dine here."

"What a treat that girl is after the *maniérées manœuvres* and yea-nay simpletons with which society is crowded," thought the Colonel, as he drove his tilbury from Lowndes Square. "Poor little sensitive plant, it would be a pity my hands should touch it and wither its freshness and fairness. Vivian Sabretasche, I say, are you growing a fool? Don't you know that the golden gates won't open for you? You barred them yourself; you have no right to complain. Have you not been going to the bad all the days of your life? Have you not persuaded the world, ever since you have lived in it, that you are a reckless, devil-may-care Don Juan, a smasher of the entire Decalogue? Why should you now, just because you have looked into that girl's two clear bright eyes, be trying to trick yourself and her into the idea that you possess such rare affairs as heart, and feeling, and regrets, because she, fresh to life, is innocent enough to have a taste for such nonsense? All folly—all folly! Back to your animate friends, horses and men, and your inanimate loves, chisel and palate, or you may grow a fool in your older years, as many wiser men have done before. You've pulled up many fair flowers in your day, you can surely leave that poor Violet in peace. Your love never did anything but harm to any woman yet."

PART THE NINTH.

I.

HOW A PORTFOLIO WAS UPSET IN ST. JAMES'S STREET.

"OH, mamma, she is such a sweetly pretty girl, and Ashton is so abominably stupid, he must have knocked them down on purpose. Open the door, Colonel Sabretasche, and let me out. It is no use telling me not—I will!"

With which enunciation of her own self-will the Hon. Violet Molyneux sprang to the ground in the middle of St. James's Street, just opposite *the* bay-window, to the unspeakable horror of her mother, and the excessive amusement of De Vigne and Sabretasche, who were driving in the Molyneux barouche. One of the powdered, white-wanded, six-feet-high plushes that swayed to and fro at the back of the carriage, having dismounted at some order of his mistress's, had happened to push, as those noble and stately creatures are given to pushing every plebeian peripatetic, against a young girl passing on the pavement. The girl had with her a portfolio of pictures, which the abrupt rencontre with Mr. Ashton sent out of her grasp, scattering its contents to the four winds of heaven, and to jump down to apologize was the work of a second with that perfectly courteous, but, according to her mamma and her female friends, much too impulsive and unconventional young beauty the Hon. Violet, whose fatal lessons, learnt on the wild moorlands and among the fragrant woods of her beloved Corallyne, the aristocratic experiences of her single season had been sadly unable to unteach her.

"Ashton, how can you be so careless? Pick those drawings up immediately and very carefully," said the young beauty, looking immeasurably severe and dignified. Then turning to the young girl, she apologized with her polished courtesy and her beaming smile for the accident her servant had caused, while Ashton, in disgusting violence to his own feelings, was compelled to bend his stately form, and even to so far fall from his pedestal of powdered propriety and flunkeyism grandeur as to run—yes, absolutely run—after one of the sketches, which, wafted by a little breeze that must have been that mischievous imp Puck himself, ambled gently and tantalizingly down the street, leading poor Ashton chasing after it. The young girl thanked her with as bright a smile as Violet's, and votes were divided among the men in the club windows as to which of the two was the most charming, though the one was a fashionable belle with every adjunct of taste and dress, and the other an unprotected little thing walking with a woman-servant in St. James's Street; an artist, probably, only she was too young, or a governess—no! she was too distinguée. She took her portfolio—by this time we in the clubs were all looking on, heartily amused, and Sabretasche and De Vigne were picking up the pictures with much more diligence than the grandiose Ashton—thanked Violet with a low graceful bow, and was passing on, when she looked up at De Vigne. Her lips parted, her eyes darkened, her face brightened with ecstatic delight. She stood still a minute, then she came back: "Sir Folko!" But De Vigne neither saw nor heard her, his foot was on the step of the barouche. Ashton shut the door with a clang, swung himself up on the footboard, and the carriage rolled away into Pall Mall.

"Violet, Violet! how you forget yourself, my love," whispered Lady Molyneux, scandalized and horror-stricken.

"I wish you would not be quite so impulsive. All the gentlemen in White's are staring at you."

"Let them stare, mamma, dear," laughed Violet, merrily. "It is a very innocent amusement, it gives them a great deal of pleasure and does me no harm. What glorious blue eyes that girl had, and such hair—real true gold, there is no color like it. You should laud me for my magnanimity in praising another girl so pretty."

"For magnanimity in that line is not a virtue of your sex," said De Vigne.

"You cynical man! I don't see why it should not be."

"Don't you? Did you, on your honor, then, fair lady, ever speak well of a rival?"

"I never had one."

"You never could," whispered Sabretasche, bending forward to tuck the tiger-skin over her.

"But supposing you had?" persisted De Vigne.

"I hope I should be above maligning her; but I am afraid to think how I should hate her."

She spoke with such unnecessary vehemence, that her mother and De Vigne stared. Violet's eyes met the Colonel's; her color rose, and he, incongruously enough, turned his head away and sighed.

"If Miss Molyneux treats the visionary things of life so earnestly, what will she do when she comes to the realities?" laughed De Vigne.

Lady Molyneux sighed; on occasions she would play at tender maternity, but it did not sit well upon her.

"Ah! Major De Vigne, if we did not find some armor besides our own strength in our life pilgrimage, few of us women would be able to endure to the end of the *Via Dolorosa*."

"True," said De Vigne, with that sarcasm now grafted in him almost as his second nature. "Britomart soon finds

a buckler studded with the diamonds of a good dower, or stiffened with the parchment-skins of handsome settlements; and, tender and gentle as she looks, manages to go through the skirmish very unscathed by dint of the vizor she keeps down so wisely, and the sharp lance of the tongue she keeps always in rest against friend and foe."

"What thrusts of the spear you deserve, Major De Vigne; you are worse than your friend, and he is bad enough!" cried Violet, looking rather lovingly, however, on the Colonel, despite his errors. "I am sure if we women do take to lance and vizor, it is only in self-defense, for you would pierce us with your flint-headed arrows of sarcasm if you could find a hole in our armor."

"But here and there is a woman who unhorses us at once, and on whom it is a shame to draw our swords. Agnes Hotots are very rare, but when we do find them, Ringsdale is safe to go down before them," said Sabretasche, with his half-mournful, half-amused, wholly eloquent glance.

"I should think you have both of you been conquered or imprisoned some time or other by some Cynisca or Maria de Jesu, whom you cannot forgive, that makes you so bitter upon us all!" laughed Violet.

She said it in the gay innocence of her heart! De Vigne had been in India so long, she had not as yet heard his history. Both he and Sabretasche were silent. Violet instinctively felt that she had trodden on dangerous ground; but they had all of them the easy tact and calm impossibility of *dérèglement naturel* in all good society—and De Vigne laughed, though a curse would have been better in unison with his thoughts.

"Miss Molyneux, with all due deference to your sex, there are few men of our age, I fear, who, if they told you the truth, would not have to confess having found more *Blanche Armorys* and *Becky Sharpes* than *Artemisias* or *Antonia*

Flaxillas. Those warm and charming feelings with which you young ladies start fresh in life have a knack of disappearing in the atmosphere of society, as gold disappears melted and swallowed up in aqua regia."

"Will you let your pure gold be lost in De Vigne's metaphorical aqua regia?" whispered the Colonel, half smiling, half sadly, as he handed her out.

"Never!"

"You mean it now, but——Well, we shall see!" And Sabretasche led her up the steps with his low, careless laugh. "When you are Madame la Princesse d'Hautebourg, or her Grace of Honiton, perhaps you will not smile so kindly on your old friends!"

She turned pale; her large eyes filled with unshed tears. She thought of the violets she had given him a few days before.

"You are unkind and unjust, Colonel Sabretasche," she said, haughtily. "What use was it pretending to wish me to tell you all I think and mean, if you disbelieve me when I do so? I thought you more kind, more true——"

"I am neither," said Sabretasche, abruptly for that ultra suave and tender squire of dames. "Ask your mamma for my character, and believe what she will tell you. I would rather you erred in thinking too ill—though that people would say is impossible—than too well of me."

"I could never think ill of you——" began Violet, vehemently.

"You would be wrong, then," said Sabretasche, so gravely, that Violet, who had only seen him a gay nonchalant man of art and fashion, was for the moment awed.

Just then her mother and De Vigne entered, and the Colonel, with his light laugh, turned round to them with some gay jest. Violet could not rally quite so quickly.

That night, at a loo party at Sabretasche's house, De

Vigne and I told the other fellows of Violet's impulsive action in St. James's Street; at which they all laughed heartily, of course, except the Colonel, who went on with his game in impassive silence.

"She's a great deal too impulsive; it's horrid bad ton," yawned little Lord Killtime, an utterly blasé gentleman of nineteen.

"I like it," said Curly. "It's a wonderful treat now-a-days to see a girl natural and pretty en même temps."

"She is very lovely, there is no doubt about that," said De Vigne. "I dare say they mean to set her up high in the market. Her mother is trying hard for Regalia."

"He's a lost man, then," said Wyndham, who had cut the Lower House and Red Tape for the lighter loves of Pam and Miss. "I never knew the Molyneux, senior, make hard running after any fellow but what she finished him, (she's retreated into the bosom of the Church now, and puts up with portly bishops and handsome popular preachers. Women often do when they get passées; the Church is not so difficile as the laity, I presume,) but ten or less years ago I vow it was dangerous to come within the signal of her fan, she'd such a clever way of setting at you, and obliging you to make love to her."

"Jockey Jack didn't care," laughed St. Lys, of the Eleventh. "Well! her daughter's no manœuvrer; she's a nice, natural, animated creature; by George, it's worth a guinea a turn to waltz with her."

"Natural!" sneered Vane Castleton, the youngest son of his Grace of Tiara, the worst of all those by no means incorruptible and very far from stainless pillars of the state, the "Castleton family." "Forward, you mean! By Heaven! I never came across so bold, off-hand, spirited a young filly."

Sabretasche looked up, anger in his languid, tired eyes

"Permit me to differ from you, Castleton. Your remark, I must say, is as much signalized by knowledge of character and penetration as it is by delicacy and elegance of phraseology! Young fellows like Killtime *may* make such mistakes of judgment; we who know the world should be wiser."

De Vigne, sitting next him, looked up and raised his eyebrows at the Colonel's unusual interference and warmth.

"Et tu, Brute?"

Sabretasche understood, and gave him an admonitory kick under the table, with the faintest of flushes on his forehead.

"Whose portrait is that, Sabretasche?" asked De Vigne, to stop Vane Castleton's tongue, pointing to a portrait over the mantel-piece in the inner drawing-room, where we were playing; the portrait of a very pretty woman, with exquisite golden hair, and a brilliant, beaming, happy face.

"My mother, when she was twenty. Didn't you know it? It was taken just before she married. I believe it was an exact likeness. I don't remember her. She was thrown from her horse, riding on the Corso, when I was a little fellow."

"It reminds me of somebody—I cannot think of whom," said De Vigne. "I beg your pardon, I take 'miss.'"

"Why will you talk through the game?" said I. "Don't you think the picture is like that girl who occasioned Violet's championship this morning? That's whom you are thinking of, I dare say."

"Who's talking now, I wonder!" said De Vigne. "Hearts trumps? I did not notice that girl; I was too amused to see Miss Molyneux. No, it is somebody else, but who, I cannot think, for the life of me."

"Nor can I help you," said Sabretasche, "for there is not a creature related to my mother living. But now

Arthur mentions it, that little girl was not unlike her; at least, I fancy she had the same colored hair; that often makes a fancied resemblance. Apropos of likenesses, there will be a very pretty picture of Lady Geraldine Ormsby in the Exhibition this year. I saw it, half finished, at Maclise's yesterday."

"Why don't you exhibit, Sabretasche?" said Wyndham. "You paint a deuced deal better than half those Fellows and Associates!"

"Bien obligé!" cried the Colonel. "I should be particularly sorry to hang up my pets off my easel to be put level with people's boots, or high above their possible vision, or—if honored with the 'second row'—be flanked by shocking red-haired pre-Raphaelite angels and staring portraits of gentlemen in militia uniform, and criticised by a crowd of would-be cognoscente and dilettante cockneys, with a catalogue in their hand and Ruskin rules in their mind, who go into ecstasies over Millias's great, glaring, wide-mouthed monstrosities, and cottage scenes with all Teniers's vulgarities and none of Teniers's redeeming talent. Exhibit my pictures? The fates forefend! Wyndham, help yourself to that Chablis, and, De Vigne, there is some of our pet Madeira. How sorry I am Madeira now grows graves instead of grapes! Nonsense! Don't any of you think of going yet. Let us sit down again for a few more rounds."

We did, and we played till the raw February dawn was growing gray in the streets, the guineas, jingling merrily in the pool, changing their owners quick as lightning, while we laughed and talked over Sabretasche's splendid wines and liqueurs—laughs that might have jarred on Violet's refined ears, and talk that might have made her young heart heavy, coming from her hero's lips. But when we were gone, and the wine carafes were emptied and the

fire burning low, the master of that exquisite Park Lane temple to Epicurus and Aristippus sat before the dying embers with his dog's head upon his knee, and thought :

"What a fool I am! With every one of the agréments of life, I am tired of it. Women, wine, cards, art, music, high play—are they all losing their enchantment for me? Are my rose-leaves beginning to lose their scent, and crumble under me? That girl—child she is to me—has been the only one who has had penetration enough to see that the *bal masqué* has ceased its charm for me. She reads me truer than all of them. She will believe no ill of me. She almost makes me wish there were no ill for her to believe! Poor Violet! she fancies me 'kind' and 'true.' Shall she be the first woman to whom I have shown mercy, the first for whom I have renounced *self*? I have trodden down flowers enough in my path, I may surely afford to spare this single 'sensitive plant.' Cid, old boy! is your master wholly dead to generosity and honor because the world happens to say he is? No more, perhaps, than he is gay, and careless, and light-hearted, because it is the fashion to consider him so!"

That night Violet Molyneux stood before her glass, in her gossamer ball dress, just home from a ball given by the Life Guards, though it was *not* the season, after some amateur theatricals. The brilliant Irish beauty had been the belle of the room; she had had fifty bouquets sent her for it, half the men there had gone and lost their heads after her straightway, she had had more partners to solicit her than she could have written on a dozen tablets, she had waltzed delightedly and untiringly as a Willis, and Violet loved waltzing and enjoyed admiration—as all women do who are the stuff to win it, only so few confess to the very natural fact—but still, just now, she stood before her glass, and sighed, as her maid detached her *bouquet de corsage*.

"Mademoiselle," said her maid, as if she divined her young mistress's thoughts, "pendant la soirée cette boîte est venue pour vous de la part de Monsieur le Colonel Sabretasche. Voulez-vous que je la fasse ouvrir?"

"Non, non, Jeanne, laissez-la; je l'ouvrirai moi-même," said Violet, hastily.

As soon as Violet's disrobing was over, and her maid dismissed for the night, down on her knees she went before Sabretasche's box. She knew what it was; it was a statuette, modeled from her pet greyhound and its puppy, that the Colonel had done for her with that chisel which Violet, at the least, thought Praxiteles' could never have equaled. It was really a pretty thing in its crimson velvet and ebony box; there was not a word with it, but Violet kissed it, laughed, and could almost have cried over it. "He did remember me, then," she thought, "though he did not come to the ball."

Violet was very rapid, you see, with her conclusions, and quite as rapid with her forgiveness.

That night De Vigne and I smoked our pipes together over his fire in Grosvenor Place, where, as his troop was quartered in town, he had for the season taken a furnished house. Vigne had been shut up since his mother's death, and he rarely alluded even distantly to his ancestral home, that had been the scene of his folly and his wrongs. I do not think he could have endured to see it, much less to live in it.

"Is Sabretasche really getting épris with that bewitching Irish girl?" said I to him, as we sat smoking.

"God knows!" said De Vigne. "He was rather touchy about her, wasn't he? But that might only be for the pleasure of setting down Castleton, a temptation I don't think I could forego myself. According to his own showing, he's never in love with any woman, but, most india-

putably, he makes love to almost all he comes across that are worth the exertion."

"Oh yes, he's a deuced fellow where the beaux yeux are concerned; but he might be really caught once, you know, though he's gone scathless all these years."

"Certainly," assented De Vigne; "none are so wise that they may not become fools. Socrates, when he was old, sage as he was, did not read in the same book with a woman without falling in love with her."

"You are complimentary to love! Is it invariably a folly?"

"I think so. At least, all I wish for is to keep clear of it all the rest of my life. Passion has cost me a vast deal too much for me ever willingly to yield to it again, even supposing I felt it, which I never shall."

"Why?" said I, looking at him, and thinking that if he renounced love, women would not renounce it for him.

"Need you ask? From my boyhood I was the fool of my passions. To love a woman was to win her. I stopped for no consideration, no duty, no obstacle; I let nothing come between me and my will. I was as obstinate to those who tried ever to stop me in any pursuit as I was weak and mad in yielding up my birthright at any price if I could but buy the mess of porridge on which I had for the time being set my fancy. Scores of times I did that—scores of times some worthless idol became the thing on which I staked my soul. Once I did it too often. You know how, as well as I. You need not wonder, I think, that I look on love as my worst foe, and a foe under whose iron heel I will never let myself be prostrate again. Arthur, you know my past, therefore I can say to you what I would to no other man. You know the curse of my life, but you do not know *how* it has cursed me. From *the hour* I left the church on my marriage-day youth was

crushed out of my heart and life. It is such eternal misery that that woman, so low-born, so low-bred, shameless, degraded, all that I *know* her to be, should bear my name, should proclaim abroad all the folly into which my reckless passions led me. Thank God I knew it when I did—thank God I left her as I did—thank God that no devils like herself were born to perpetuate my shame, and make me loathe my name because they bore it. Then you ask me if I am steeled to love! Love was the mocking Circe, the beautiful fiend, the painted syren, that lured me to my betrayal. It has changed my whole nature—the misery of that loathsome connection; it has altered what was soft in me into marble, what was warm into ice. It is not the tie I care for—of the importance of marriage I think little, of affection still less—it is the odium of knowing that she bears my name, the humiliation of remembering that twice in my life have I been fooled by her coarse, mindless, sensuous beauty, her depraved mind, her cruel heart; it is the remorse of pride sacrificed to mad self-will; the agony of feeling that my mother, the only pure, the only true, the only generous love fate ever gave me, died, murdered by my reckless passions.”

His hands clinched on the arms of his chair; a gray, ashy hue set over his face; it looked cast in dark, cold stone. It was my first glimpse of that spirit which, exorcised or invisible, in society and ordinary life, fastened relentless upon him in his hours of solitude. Passion was very far from dead in that hot, vehement, and deep-seated nature, though now it was hurled from its throne, and chained down hard, and fixed in fetters of iron by a resolute hand.

That night, too, at that same hour, in a little bed whose curtains and linen were white and pure as lilies, a young girl slept, like a rosebud lying on new-fallen snow; her

golden hair fell over her shoulders, her blue eyes were closed under their black silky lashes, a bright, happy smile was on her lips, and as she turned in her dreams she spoke unconsciously in her sleep two words—"Sir Folko!"

II.

HOW A WIFE TALKED OF HER HUSBAND.

IN a very gay and gaudy drawing-room in the Champs Elysées, in an arm-chair, with her feet on a chaufferette, in a scarlet peignoir trimmed with lace, looking a very imposing and richly-colored picture, sat the Trefusis, (such I have always called her and always shall,) none the less handsome for six years' wear in Paris life, intermixed with visits to the Bads, where she was almost as great an attraction as the green tables, and the sound of her name as great a charm as the irresistible "*Faites votre jeu, messieurs—faites votre jeu!*" a little fuller about the cheek and chin, a trifle more Junoesque in form, a little higher tinted in the carnation hue of her roses, otherwise none the worse for the eight years that had passed since she wore the orange-blossoms and the diamond ceinture, on her marriage morning in Vigne church.

She had an English paper in her hand, and was running her eye over the fashionable intelligence. Opposite to her was old Fantyre, her nose a little more hooked, her eye sharper, her rouge higher, a little more dirty, quick, witty, and detestable, than of yore; taking what she called a *demi-tasse*, but which looked uncommonly like cognac uncontaminated by Mocha. They led a very pleasant life in *Paris*, I dare say; with the old lady's quick wits, question-

able introductions, and imperturbable impudence, and the Trefusis's beauty, riches, and excessive freedom, they were pretty certain to find plenty of people to drink their champagne, play écarté, go to the Pré Catalan, and make gay parties to the Bois de Boulogne with them; and if they did not know the De Broglie, the Rochefoucauld, the Rochejacquelein, the Tintiniac, and all the great Legitimist nobles, there were plenty of others as gay and as amusing, if not as exclusive, as the grandes of the Faubourg and the Place Vendôme.

"What's the matter, my dear?" asked Lady Fantyre; "you don't look best pleased."

"I am *not* pleased," said the Trefusis, her brow dark, and her full under-lip protruded. "De Vigne is come back."

"Dear, dear! how tiresome!" cried the Fantyre; "just when you'd begun to hope he'd been killed in India. Well, that is annoying. It's a nice property to be kept out of, ain't it? But you see, my dear, strong men of his age are not good ones to be heir to, even with all the chances of war. So he's come back, is he? What for, I wonder?"

"Here it is, among the arrivals: 'Meurice's Hotel: Major De Vigne.' He is come back because he is tired of Scinde, probably. I wonder if he will come to Paris? I should like to meet him." And the Trefusis laughed, showing her white regular teeth.

"Why, my dear? To give him a dose of that absinthe, that your friend De Croquenoire killed himself with last week; because you won fifty thousand francs from him at écarté in ten nights, and then laughed at him to Anatole de Félice? No, you're too prudent to do anything of that sort. Whatever other commandments you break, my dear, it won't be the sixth, because there's a capital punishment for it," said the old lady, chuckling at the simple idea.

"You'd like to meet him, you say—I shouldn't. I don't forget his face in the vestry. Lord! how he did look! his face as white as a corpse, and as fierce as the devil's."

"Did you ever see the devil?" sneered the Trefusis.

"Yes, my dear—in a scarlet peignoir; and very well he looks in women's clothes, too," said the Fantyre, with a diabolical grin.

The Trefusis laughed too:

"*He* has found me a devil, at any rate."

"Well, yes; everybody has, I think, that has the pleasure of your acquaintance," chuckled Lady Fantyre. "But I don't think so much of your revenge, myself. What's three thousand a year out of his property? And as for not letting him marry, I think that's oftener kindness than cruelty to a man. Don't you think it would have been better to have queened it at Vigne (what a splendid place that was, to be sure! and such wines as he had!) and had an establishment in Eaton Square, and spent his forty thousand a year for him, and made yourself a London leader of fashion, and ridden over the necks of those haughty Ferrers people, (by the way, those girls didn't marry so very well after all,) and all his stiff-necked friends—that beautiful creature, Vivian Sabretasche, among 'em? What do you think, eh?"

"It might have been better for me, but it would have spoilt my revenge. He would have left me sooner or later, and as he is infinitely too proud and reserved a man to have told the world the secret of his disgrace in finding Constance Trefusis to be Lucy Davis, I should have lost the one grand sting in my vengeance—his humiliation before the world."

"Pooh, pooh! my dear, a man of fortune is never humiliated; the world's too fond of him. The sins of the *fathers* are only visited on the children where the children

are going down in the world." (The Fantyre might be a nasty old woman, but she spoke greater truths than most good people.) "So," continued the old lady, "you sacrificed your aggrandizement to your revenge? Not over sensible."

"You can't accuse me of often yielding to any weakness," said the Trefusis, with a look in her eye like a vicious mare. "However, my revenge is not finished yet."

"Eh? Not? What's the next act? On my word, you're a clever woman, Constance. You do my heart good."

The first time, by the way, that Lady Fantyre ever acknowledged to a heart, or the Trefusis received such a compliment.

"This. Remember, I know his nature—you do not. Some day or other De Vigne will love passionately—probably somebody in his own rank, and as utterly unlike me as possible. *Then* he will want to be free; then, indeed, he shall realize the curse of the fetters of church and law by which I hold him."

The old lady chuckled immensely over the amusing prospect:

"Very likely, my dear. It's just what they can't do that they always want to do. Tell a man wine's good for him, and forbid him water, he'd forswear his cellar, and run to the pump immediately. And if you heard that he'd fallen in love, what would you do?"

"Go to England, and put myself between her and him, as his deserted, injured, much enduring, and loving wife."

Old Fantyre drank up her coffee, and nodded approvingly.

"That's right, my dear! Play your game. Play it out; only take care to keep the honors in your own hand, and never trump your partner's card."

"Not much fear of my doing that," said the Trefusis, with a grim smile.

There was not, indeed; she marked her cards too cleverly. Yet cards marked with all the dexterity imaginable *have* been found out on occasion, and the consequences have been a very uncomfortable esclandre to the sharper who devised them.

III.

HOW WE FOUND THE LITTLE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES IN RICHMOND PARK.

NOT content with his house in Park Lane, Sabretasche had lately bought, besides it, a place at Richmond that had belonged to a rich old Indian millionaire. It was an exquisite place, for it had been originally built and laid out by people of good taste, and the merchant had not lived long enough in it to spoil it: he had only christened it the Dilcoosha, which title, meaning Heart's Delight, and being out of the common, Sabretasche retained. It was very charming, with its gardens, more like an Arabian dream than anything I ever saw, sloping down to the Thames. It was a pet with the Colonel, and was a sort of Strawberry Hill, save that his taste was much more symmetrical and graceful than Horace's; and he spent plenty of both time and money, touching it up and perfecting it till it was beautiful in its way as Luciennes. De Vigne and I drove down one morning to the Dilcoosha, toward the end of February, to see the paces tried, on a level bit of grass-land outside the grounds, of a beautiful chestnut Sabretasche had entered for the Ascot Cup, and rechristened, with Violet Molyneux's permission, "*La Violette*." Stable slang and the delights of "ossy men" were

not refined enough for the Colonel's taste, but he liked to keep a good racing stud; he liked his horses to run, because it gave him an interest and excitement in the race, and he wished to have De Vigne's opinion of La Violette, for De Vigne, who loved horseflesh cordially, was one of the best judges of it, and one of the surest prophets of success or failure that ever talked over a coming Derby on a Sunday afternoon at Tattersall's.

So De Vigne and I agreed to lunch with him at Richmond, one morning, and after parade De Vigne drove down his mail phaeton, picked me up in Kensington, and we bowled along the road to the Dilcoosha at a spanking pace, he handling the ribbons of a splendid pair of grays—not the Cupid and Psyche he had driven tandem to the Strand to see old Boughton Tressillian nearly nine years before, but first-rate goers—who tooled us along at ten miles an hour, while a great bull-dog, a new purchase of De Vigne's, as savage a creature as I ever beheld, and for that reason no favorite with his master, tore along beside us in the whirlwind of dust raised by the grays and the phaeton.

"What trick do you think my man Harris served me yesterday?" said De Vigne, as we came near Richmond.

"Harris—that good-natured fellow? What has he done."

"Cut and run with a dozen of my shirts, three morning and two dress coats—in fact, a complete wardrobe, and twenty pounds or so—I really forget how much exactly—that I had left on the dressing-table when I went to mess last night. And that man I took out of actual starvation at Bombay, have forgiven him fifty odd peccadilloes, let him off when I found him taking a case of my sherry, because he blubbered and said it was for his mother, found up the poor old woman, who *wasn't* a myth, and wrote to

Stevens at Vigne to give her an almshouse, and then this fellow walks off with fifty pounds' worth of my goods! And you talk to me of people's gratitude! Bah! How can you have the face, Arthur, to ask me to admire human nature?"

"I don't ask you to admire it—Heaven forefend!—I don't like it well enough myself. What a confounded rascal! 'Pon my life there seems a fate in your seeing the dark side of humanity."

"The *dark* side? Where's any other? I never found any gratitude yet, and I don't expect any. People court you while you're of use to them; when you are not, you may go hang. Indeed, they will help to swing you off the stage, to lessen their own sense of obligation."

"But I swear," I exclaimed, wrathfully, "that everybody seems eternally bent on doing you wrong. You do them kindnesses and get no thanks. I give you leave to be as skeptical as you choose; you have full warrant."

"I should say so. My old cockatoo is the only thing faithful to me," said De Vigne, with a laugh, "and he'd go, I dare say, to anybody who offered him a larger piece of fruit or butter. Poor old Cocky! there's no reason why he should be better than the grand, highly-cultured, spiritual 'genus homo,' who are so fond of claiming affinity with the angels and of looking down on him as a very inferior creation. Yes, Harris cut and run; it's rather fun to me he did it so cleverly; it's intensely amusing to spy out all these people's little arts and machineries. He packed the things quietly in my valise when I was gone to mess, told the other servants the Major was going to the north for salmon-fishing with Colonel Sabretasche, and wished his things to be taken to the station; had a cab hailed, and drove off, telling them he and the Major should *be back* in a fortnight at most. Wasn't it a good idea?

There's one thing, I've a much cleverer fellow in his stead, so I am rather a gainer. This man's name is Raymond; he knows French and German very well, is thoroughly used to his business, and will be much more use to me. He's really quite an elegant-looking fellow. When *he* walks off with anything, it won't be less than my diamond wrist-band studs or my dinner plate. Hallo! what's the row? What is that brute Moustache doing? I know that dog will come to grief some day."

We were now driving through the park, that fresh, beautiful park that the barbarous Yankee decreed to want "clearing"—I should say, his appreciation of beauty wanted clearing rather more—and the dog had bounded on many yards in front of us, with his black muzzle to the ground, apparently more engaged in bringing others to grief than coming to grief himself, for, having met a very small Skye in his onward path, he had immediately given chase; and having nipped scores of cats, and not a few dogs, by the neck in his time, and being in his general habits a most blood-thirsty individual, it was easy to predict which way the chase would end. De Vigne whistled and shouted to him—all in vain. Moustache had only belonged to him a few days, and had not the slightest respect for his master. The little Skye fled before him; but the Skye's minutes were already numbered, when a girl, sketching under the trees, sprang forward, caught up the little dog, and slowly retreated, keeping her eyes steadily fixed on Moustache's fierce, glaring, yellow eyeballs, and ferocious white fangs, which his lips, curled up in an ominous growl, fully displayed. We had barely reached the spot, even at our stretching gallop—and De Vigne lashed the horses like mad, for he knew the bull-dog was dangerous—when Moustache, furious at the interruption to his sport, leaped up and snapped at the puppy. The girl, with more *gluck*

than prudence, lifted her Skye out of his reach, and struck the bull-dog's great bullet head with all the force of her little clinched right hand. Moustache gave one fierce low growl, sprang upon her and knocked her down, griping at her throat. Just as his immense teeth, covered with angry foam, almost touched her neck, De Vigne sprang off the phaeton, caught the dog's skin, and dragged him back. Moustache strove like a mad thing to wrench from his grasp, and fly at him, for, balked of its prey twice, its savageness was as dangerous as madness. De Vigne set his teeth; it was as much as he could do to hold the furious beast, but he clinched at its throat harder and harder, never relaxing the iron hold of his right hand, till, as the struggles in his grasp grew fainter and more feeble, and Moustache was well-nigh strangled, he stretched out his left hand to me for the driving-whip; but the girl, who had not fainted, or screamed, or had any nonsense, sprang up, laid her hand on his arm, and said, in a pretty, soft, beseeching voice,—

“Please don't hurt your dog any more—pray don't. He could not tell he was doing any wrong, poor fellow, and he has had quite punishment enough.”

De Vigne turned to her with a smile. He liked her for thinking of the dog instead of her own past danger.

“Yes, he knew he was doing wrong, because he has been taught never to fly at anything without command. But, to be sure, he cannot help the nature he was born with being a savage one; and, I dare say, the only law he will recognize will be a muzzle. It is I who am to blame, for letting him go without one. You are not hurt at all, I trust? You are a very brave young lady not to be more frightened.”

She was frightened, though; for, now the excitement was over, she was very pale, and trembled a good deal besides.

She had to lean against one of the trees, for in her fall she had slightly twisted her left ankle.

"You have hurt your foot!" exclaimed De Vigne. "Confound the dog, what a fool I was to bring him! Is it very painful?"

"No."

"I fancy it is, in spite of your denial. I fear you will never forgive my dog or me, and if you do, I shall not easily pardon myself for allowing such a savage brute to run loose. Pray do not try to walk," he cried, as the girl, with a bright smile, began to limp along the road. "Allow me to drive you to your home; if you exert that ankle while it is just hurt you may have such a tedious sprain. Let me drive you home. If you refuse, I shall think you bear some resentment still, and it would only be just if you did. Allow me—pray do."

"Oh, thank you, it is not far; but there are all my sketching things, and—indeed, I think I could walk."

"But I think indeed you must not. Soames, give the ribbons to Captain Chevasney, and go and pick up those drawings and color-boxes under the tree yonder. Now, where may I drive?" said De Vigne, lifting the little artist into the front seat, with her Skye on her lap, and her portfolio, block, and moist-color-box under the seat. Soames was bidden to walk on to Colonel Sabretasche's. I got up in the back seat, and De Vigne took the ribbons, gave the grays their heads, and started off again. The young artist was a very fascinating-looking little waif and stray; but De Vigne would have done just the same if it had been an elderly gentleman, or an old market woman, whom Moustache had disabled. "Where am I to drive?" he asked.

"To St. Crucis-on-the-Hill; a long name, but a very little farm," laughed the girl. "You do not know it, I

dare say? No; I thought not. When we are out of the park turn to the left, take the first turning to the right, and a quarter of a mile straight on will bring you there. I am so sorry to take you so far."

"My grays will do 'so far' in ten minutes," said De Vigne, smiling. It was no particular pleasure to him to drive this girl home, and he did not say it was; he never complimented by mere complaisance now. "Do you often come to sketch in this park?"

"Almost every day," said the little lady, who had not lost the dear privilege of her sex, the tongue, and talked to De Vigne as frankly as to an old acquaintance. "I love the trees so dearly. I am never tired of watching the shadows fade off and on, and the delicate, fresh first green give place to golden brown, and the shy, graceful deer come trooping up to lie down under their great boughs. One can never tire of woodland scenery, there is so much change in it."

"You take a different view of Richmond Park to the generality," laughed De Vigne. "With most young ladies Richmond is connected with water parties and déjeûners, flirtations and champagne."

She laughed.

"I know of none of those things, so I cannot well associate them with it. Richmond to me is full of other remembrances: of charming Horace Walpole and lovely Anne Damer, of Swift and Gay, and St. John and the 'little crooked thing that asks questions,' (how I detest Lady Mary for calling him so!) and all those courtly gentlemen and stately ladies with their hoops and their patches, their minuets and their Ombre, who used to gather here like so many Watteau groups."

"She's talkative enough!" thought De Vigne, as he answered her: "Few young ladies who come to Richmond now would know much about your associations, despite

their 'finishing.' Their present is too full of inanities to allow them time to dwell on the beauties of the past."

"And my present is so empty that I am driven to history for companions and memories," said the girl, with a shadow on her face. "This is the turning—in at that gate, if you please."

We turned in at the gate—it was as much as the dashing mail phaeton could do to pass it—and into a small paved court belonging to a little farm. On one side of it stood hayricks and a barn, where a stout, red-haired Omphale was feeding chickens, and beguiling an awkward Hercules in fustian from his proper task of taking out a cartful of bread into the town; on the other side stood the house, a long, low, thatched, and picturesque tenement, more like Hampshire than Middlesex; at the bottom there was a garden, an orchard, and a paddock, now black and bare enough in the chill February morning.

"You will come in?" said the little artist, as we drew up before the door. "Pray do. I want to speak to you."

"What a strange little thing!" whispered De Vigne to me, as we followed her through the house to a room at the west end, a long low room, with an easel standing in its wide bay-window, and water-colors, etchings, pastels, études à deux crayons, pictures of all kinds, were hung about its walls, while some books, and casts, and flowers gave a refinement to its plain simplicity often wanting in many a gilt and gorgeous drawing-room I have entered.

"So you have not recognized me!" said the girl, taking off her black hat, and looking up in De Vigne's face.

As she spoke, I remembered her as the same with the subject of Violet Molyneux's amusing episode in Pall Mall. De Vigne was wholly surprised; he looked at her for some moments.

"Recognize you? I am ashamed to say I do not."

"Ah! you have so much more to think of than I. It is not the least likely you could, but I have never forgotten *you*, Sir Folko. I knew you the other day, when that young lady's servant knocked down my portfolio. Have you quite forgotten little Alma? I am so glad to see you—you cannot think how much!"

And Alma Tressillian held out both her hands to him, with a bright, joyous smile on her upraised face.

"Little Alma!" repeated De Vigne. "Yes, yes! I remember you now. Where could my mind have gone not to recognize you at once? You are not the least altered since you were a child. But how have you come from Lorave to London? Come, tell me everything. My dear child, you are not more pleased to see me than I am to see you!"

I think that was only a bit of courteous kindness on De Vigne's part; in reality, he cared very little about it, though Alma Tressillian was pretty enough not to have been viewed altogether with indifference by most men. I am not sure, though, that pretty is the word for her. It is so dealt out to every girl who resembles those lovely waxen dolls sold in diminutive baby-clothes or ball-dresses in the Pantheon, or who chances to have a pink color and a stereotyped smile, that I hate using it to a woman *worth* admiring. I generally take refuge in those far higher words—fascinating, séduisante, brilliant, attrayante—where I really like a woman—but how few deserve those epithets! Alma was little altered since her childhood: now, as then, her golden hair and eloquent dark-blue eyes, with the constant change, and play, and animation of all her features, made her greatest beauty. They were not regularly beautiful as Violet Molyneux's, though with her, as with Violet, the mobility and extreme intellectuality of expression was *the* chief charm, after all. She was not so tall as Violet,

nor had she that exquisite and perfect form which made the belle of the season compared with Pauline Bonaparte; but she had something graceful and fairylike about her, and both her face and figure were instinct with a life, an intelligence, a radiance of expression which promised you a rare combination of sweet temper and hot passions, intense susceptibility, and highly cultivated intellect. You might not have called her pretty: you must have called her much more—irresistibly winning and attractive.

"Come, tell me everything about yourself," repeated De Vigne, as he pushed a low chair for her, and threw himself down on an arm-chair near. "You must remember Captain Chevasney as well as you do me. We shall both of us be anxious to hear all you have to tell."

"Yes, I remember him," smiled Alma, with a pretty bend of her head, (she did not add "as well.") "I was so sorry when you did not see me that day in Pall Mall; I thought I might never come across you again. You must not be too cross to that poor bull-dog, for if he had not flown at Sylvio I might not have found you now."

"I am under obligations to Moustache, certainly," said De Vigne, with a half-smile. "Nevertheless, I shall never bring him here again, for his fangs were dangerously near your throat. He is a savage brute, but he has had a lesson he will not easily forget. But where is your grandpapa?—is he in town?"

She looked down, and her lips quivered:

"Grandpapa is in Lorave. He has been dead three years."

"Dead! My dear child, how careless of me! I am grieved, indeed!" exclaimed De Vigne, involuntarily.

"You could not tell," answered Alma, looking up at him, great tears in her blue eyes. "He died more than three years ago, but it is as fresh to me as if it were but

yesterday. Nobody will ever love me as he did. He was so kind, so gentle, so good. In losing him I lost everything. I prayed day and night that I might die with him; he was my only friend!"

"Poor little Alma!" said De Vigne, touched out of that haughty reserve now habitual to him. "I am grieved to hear it, both for the loss to you of your only protector, and the loss to the world of as true-hearted and noble-natured a man as ever breathed. If I had been in England he would have seen me in Lorave, as I promised, but I have been in India the eight years since we parted. I wish I had written to him; I ought to have done so; but one never knows things till too late."

"He left a letter for you, in case I should ever meet you. You were the only person kind to us after the loss of his fortune," said Alma, as she sprang across the room—all her movements were rapid, and had something foreign in them—knelt down before a desk, and brought an unsealed envelope to De Vigne, directed to him by a hand now powerless forever.

"This for me? I wish I had seen him," said De Vigne, as he put it away in the breast of his coat. "I ought to have written to him; but my own affairs engrossed me, and—we are all profound egotists, you know, whatever unselfishness we may pretend. What was the cause of his death? Will it pain you to tell me?"

"Paralysis. He had a paralytic stroke six months before, which ended in congestion of the brain. But how gentle, how good, how patient he was through it all! There was never any one like him."

She stopped again; the tears rolled off her long black lashes. She was quite unaccustomed to conceal what she felt, and she did not know that feeling is bad ton.

"And you have been in England ever since?" asked De Vigne, to divert her thoughts.

"Oh no!" she answered, brushing the tears off her lashes. "You know Miss Russell, the governess grandpapa took for me to Lorave? She has been so kind. She was with me at grandpapa's death. I was fifteen then, and for a year afterward she stayed with me in Lorave; I loved the place so dearly, dearer still after his grave was there, and I could not bear to leave it. But Miss Russell had no money, and no home. She works for her living, and she could not waste her time on me, and the little grandpapa could leave me was not enough for both of us. She was obliged to look for another situation, and when she came over to it—it is in a rector's family near Staines—I came over with her, and she placed me here. My old nurse has this farm; grandpapa bought it for her many years ago, when she left us and married. Her husband is dead, but she keeps on the farm, and makes bread to send into town. It was the only place we knew of, and nurse was so delighted to let me have the rooms that I have been here ever since."

"Poor little thing, what a life!" cried De Vigne, involuntarily. "How dull you must be, Alma!"

She raised her eyebrows and shrugged her shoulders. Gesticulation was natural to her, and she had caught it still more from the Italians at Lorave.

"Buried alive! Sylvo to talk to, and the flowers to talk to me—that is my society. But wherever I might have been, I should have missed *him* equally, and I can never be alone while I have my easel and my books."

"Have you painted these?" I exclaimed, in surprise, for there were masterly strokes in the sketches on the walls that would have shamed more than one "Associate."

"Yes. An Italian artist, spending the summer at Lorave, saw me drawing one day; something as Cimabue saw little Giotto, and had me to his studio, and gave me a

regular course of instruction. He told me I might equal Elizabetta Sirani. I shall never do that, I am afraid, but I worship art, and even now I find a very good sale for my little sketches; they take them at Ackermann's and Faer's, and I work hard. Work is a wrong word though, it is my delight. I go and sketch every day out of doors, to catch the winter and summer tints. But I hate winter; it is so unkind, so cheerless. I always paint spring and summer in my pictures; not your poor pale English summer, but summer golden and glorious, with the boughs hanging to the ground with the weight of their own beauty, and the vineyards and corn-fields glowing with their rich promise for the autumn."

"Enthusiastic as ever?" laughed De Vigne. "How are our friends the fairies, Alma?"

"Do you suppose I shall give news of them to a disbeliever?" said Alma, with a toss of her head. "I have not forgotten your want of faith. Are you as great a skeptic now?"

"Ten times more so—not only of fairy lore, but of pretty well everything else. Fairies are as well worth credence as all the other faiths, creeds, and superstitions of the day; I would as soon credit Queen Mab as a 'doctrinal point.' Years add to our skepticism instead of lessening it. What do *you* think of the fairies now?"

"Look! Do you not think I sketched that from sight?" said Alma, turning her easel to him, where she had sketched in water-colors a charming Titania—a true Titania, such as "on pressed flowers does sleep," for whom "the cowslips tall her pensioners be:"

Where oxlips and the nodding violets grow,
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine,
Lulled in those flowers with dances and delight;

the veritable fairy queen of those dainty offsprings of romance, who used to meet

in grove or green,
By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen.

"How splendidly you draw, Alma!" exclaimed De Vigne. "If you exhibited at the Water-Color Society, you would excite as much wonder as Rosa Bonheur. And do these pay you well?"

"Yes; at least, what seems so to me."

"Pauvre enfant!" smiled De Vigne; her ideas of wealth and his were strikingly different. "A friend of mine is a great connoisseur of these things. I must show them to him some day; but I cannot stay now, for I have an engagement at two, and it is now striking."

"But you will come and see me again," interrupted Alma, beseechingly. "Pray do. You cannot think how lonely I am. I have no friends, you know."

"Oh yes, I will come," answered De Vigne. "I have much more to hear about you and your pursuits. How could you know us, Alma, after so long?"

"I did not know Captain Chevasney," said the little lady, with uncomplimentary frankness, "but I knew you perfectly. The first picture I could really sketch was one of your face, as I remembered it, for Sir Folko. You know I always thought you like him. I will show it you some day. Besides, grandpapa talked of you so constantly, and I was always expecting you to come to Lorave with your yacht, as you had promised, that it was impossible for me to forget you. I was so grieved when you did not notice me in Pall Mall. I called you, but you did not hear. You were thinking of that young lady. How lovely she was! Who is she?"

"Violet Molyneux—Lord Molyneux's daughter. I was

not thinking of her, though, but that the pair of horses in her carriage were not worth half what I heard they gave for them. Young ladies are the last things in my thoughts, I assure you," said De Vigne, laughing, as he gave her his hand; "and now, good-by. I am very pleased to have found you out. I shall not be long before I find my way to the farm again—*without* my bull-dog."

The gentle courtesy natural to him from his good breeding made his manner very winning to women, especially when he discarded the cold reserve and cynical sarcasm now habitual to him. No wonder that Alma looked gratefully in his face, and bid him, with a radiant smile, not defer his promised visit to St. Crucis, as he had done his promised yachting to Lorave. She guessed little enough *what* had prevented that yachting to Lorave.

"Strange we should have lighted on that child!" said he, as we drove to the Dilcoosha. "She is the same frank, impulsive, enthusiastic little thing as when we first saw her. She was the heiress of Weive Hurst then; now she has to work for her bread. Who can prophesy the ups and downs of life? Here am I with forty thousand a year, bored to death, and might be happier if I were a private on sixpence a day; and there is a girl, a delicate child, who has to earn her critical subsistence by her talents. Boughton Tressillian was game to the backbone. Perhaps she inherits some of his pluck—it is to be hoped so—she will want it. A woman, young, unprotected, and as attractive as she looks, is pretty sure to come to grief some way or other. Her very virtues will be her ruin! She is not one of your sensible, prudent, cold, commonplace women, who go through the world scathless; Lucretias and Casta Divas, too wise to err, too selfish to sacrifice themselves, who win from an admiring public a reputation for virtue and honor, *while their real mainsprings are prudence and egotism.*

Alma will come to grief, I am afraid. Here, take the reins, Arthur, and I will see what her grandfather says. Poor old fellow! my conscience will prick me for having neglected him. I might have written when I was in Scinde, but I thought of nothing there but my troop, and 'slaying my fellow-creatures,' as Sabretasche terms it."

He tore open the letter, and gave a long whistle as he finished it.

"What's the matter?" said I.

"Poor little thing! She hasn't thirty pounds a year, and isn't his grandchild after all."

"Not his grandchild! What do you mean?"

"What I say."

"His daughter, I suppose?"

"No; no relation at all. The letter is scrawled to me, broken off unfinished; probably where his hand and strength failed him, poor old man! He says my name recurred to him as the only person who had not heeded his decline of fortune, and the only man of honor whom he could trust. Out of his income as consul he contrived to save her a few hundreds—voilà tout! He must leave her, of course, to struggle for herself; and this is what weighs so heavily upon him, because, it seems, he adopted this child, who was not the slightest relation to him, when she was three years old, believing, of course, that he would make her one of the richest heiresses in England; and, according to his view of the case, he considers he has done her a great wrong. Who she is he does not tell me, except that she was a little Italian girl he picked up in Naples. He was going, no doubt, to add more, as he began the letter by saying he wished her secret to be known to some one, and having heard much of my mother's sweet and generous character, appealed to her, through me, to aid and serve Alma, if she would; but here the sentence breaks off un-

finished. Poor fellow! his strength failed him, I suppose."

"Do you think Alma knows it; she calls him her grandfather still?"

"Can't say—yet of course she does," said De Vigne, with a cynical smile. "No woman's curiosity ever allowed her to keep an unsealed letter three years and never look into it. However, I will not tell her of it till I see whether she does or not. Here we are. It will be as well not to tell Sabretasche of his little neighbor, eh? He is such a deuced fellow for women, and she would be certain to go down before his thousand-and-one accomplishments. Not that it would matter much, perhaps; she will be somebody's prey, no doubt, and she might as well be the Colonel's as any other man's, save that he is a little quicker fickle than most, knowing better than most the little value of his toys."

With which concluding sarcasm De Vigne threw the reins to his groom, who met him at the door, and entered that abode of perfect taste and epicurean luxury, known as the Dilcoosha, where Sabretasche and luncheon were waiting for us; and where, after due discussion of Strasbourg pâtés, Comet Hock, Bass, and the news of the day, we inspected La Violette's paces, pronounced her pretty certain, unless something very unforeseen in the way of twitch and opium-ball occurred, to win the Queen's Cup, and drove back to town together, De Vigne to go into the U. S., Sabretasche to accompany Violet Molyneux and her mother to a morning concert, and I to call on a certain lady who had well-nigh broken my heart when it was young and breakable, who had exchanged rings with me under the Kensington Garden trees, when she was fresh, fair, kind-natured Gwen Brandling, and who was now *staying in town* as Madame la Duchesse de la Vieillecour, a

French ambassador's wife, black velvet and point replacing the muslin and ribbons, dignity in the stead of girlish grace, and—hélas pour mes beaux jours!—a fin sourire of skilled coquetry in lieu of that heartfelt sunny smile, Gwen's whilom charm. I take it doves are sold by the dozen on the altar steps of St. George's, but—it is true that the doves have a strange passion for the gold coins that buy them, and would not fly away if they could!

N'importe! Madame de la Vieillecour and I met as became people living in good society; if less fresh she was perhaps more fascinating, and though one begins life tender and transparent as Sèvres, one is stone-china, luckily, long before the finish, warranted never to break at any blows whatever. And as I drove my tilbury from the Duchess's door, I thought, I did not know why, of little Alma Tresillian, who was just opening the fresh leaves of *her* book of life;—she looked terribly delicate Sèvres *now*, needing gentlest touches, tenderest shelter. When it had passed through the furnace and come forth from the fire, would the Sèvres be hardened or—destroyed?

PART THE TENTH.

I.

HOW VIOLET MOLYNEUX TOUCHED OTHER CHORDS THAN
THOSE IN HER SONG.

SCARCELY any one was in town except a few very early birds, heralds of the coming season, and the members, victims to an un pitying nation; but there were still some people one knew dotted about in Belgravia and Park Lane, others in jointure-houses or villas up "Tamese Rîve,"

among them a very pretty widow, Leila Lady Puffdoff, who dwelt in the retirement of her dower-house at Twickenham, and enlivened the latter portion of her veuvage by *matinées musicales*, breakfasts, and luncheons for some of those dear friends who had been the detestation of le feu Puffdoff, he being old and not a little jealous. To a combination of all three, Sabretasche, De Vigne, Curly, a man called Monckton, and myself, drove in De Vigne's drag a day or two after our rencontre with little Alma Tressillian.

"An amateur affair, isn't it?" asked De Vigne. "Artists' morning concerts are bad enough, where Italian singers barbarize 'Annie Laurie' into an allegro movement with shakes and *aspeggios*, and English singers scream Italian with vile British o's and a's; but amateur *matinées musicales*, where highly finished young beauties in becoming morning toilettes excruciate one's ears, whether they have melody in their voices or no, just because they have been taught by Garcia or Gardoni, are absolutely unbearable. Don't you think so, you worshiper of harmony?"

"I? Certainly," responded Sabretasche. "As a rule, I shun all amateur things. Where professional people, who have applied, sixteen hours a day, all their energies and all their capabilities to one subject, even then rarely succeed, how is it possible but that the performances of those who take up the study as a pastime must be a miserable failure, or at best but second-rate? Occasionally, however, (indeed *whenever* you see it, but the sight is so rare!) talent will do for you without study more than study ever will——"

"As you will show us in your songs this morning, I suppose?" laughed Monckton.

"If I sang ill I should never sing at all," replied Sabretasche, carelessly, with that consciousness of power which

true talent is as sure to have; as it is sure *not* to have undue self-appreciation. "I mean, however, in Miss Molyneux's Aria; even you will admire that, De Vigne."

"Violet?" said Monckton. "She does sing tolerably; but I can't say I like that girl—so much too satirical for a woman."

"I dare say you may find her so. I know popular preachers who consider Thackeray too satirical as an author, because he drew the portrait of Charles Honey-mann," said Sabretasche, quietly.

"Something new to hear the Colonel defending a woman's character," whispered the injured Monckton to me on the back seat. "He generally is more the cause of blackening 'em, eh?"

"I wish I were like you, Sabretasche," laughed De Vigne, "and could shut myself in, and the world out, of my studio while I chipped my marble, or filled my canvas, or, like Curly here, who worships his whiskers, and his bottes vernies, and *really* thinks women delightful to flirt with and adore. I wish to Heaven I were an artist, or a dandy——"

"Or anything but a married man, eh?" sneered Monckton.

Sabretasche's expressive face grew dark at his words, Curly's languid eye flashed fire, and I gave Monckton a pretty hard kick, I can assure you.

"I wish I were either an artist or a dandy," pursued De Vigne, quietly, though he set his teeth hard, and you could see the blood mount even into the pale bronze of his cheek; "each has his *métier*, finds his mission, and employs his time. Now, poor devil that I am, what can I do? Read whatever trash of technical science and Boswellian biographies comes out; mix in society to bore and to be bored; buy horses and bet on them; say *Cui bono?* like Sabretasche,

to all of them. Sport, to be sure, there is, and libraries; those one can't tire of; but beyond, what is there for a man to do?"

"You can come and see the Puffdoff, and get her longs yeux fired at you, for the best of all reasons, that you are profoundly insensible to the effect of her artillery," said I, as we turned into the grounds of that fair countess-dowager, aged twenty-two!

"She's a brilliant-looking woman, De Vigne," laughed Sabretasche. "You should be grateful for being an mieux with her."

"Brilliant? Very much so. But so are the tinsel wings at the ballet."

"Hang it, she is very charming, De Vigne!" cried Curly.

"Certainly. Pity the charms are rouge, Kalydor, and Oriental tint, and would vanish out of sight if her maid and dressing-box were stolen."

"How confoundedly satirical you are!"

"No, I am not," said De Vigné.

Nor was he. He was only too clear-sighted for his own peace. Should we not at thirty take a great pleasure in Drury Lane, if we preserved the happy faith we had at ten in the witticisms of the clown, the miseries of ill-starred pantaloons, the glories of the gorgeous creature in green velvet and Spanish boots, the adorable charms of the fairy creature in gauze and spangles, who danced before the village show in our gleeful childhood? *Passez-moi le mot*, the comparison is stale, but a pantomime, with its paint, its clap-trap, its worn-out jokes, its grimaced smiles, its trap-doors and its artifices, its gay-colored scenes and its dirty bustling coulisses, where those who throne it as kings and lords upon the boards eat bread and cheese with *aching hearts* in the green-room behind, is so like society!

Yet if one has been behind it all, and only mentions in profoundest pity that its Rachels speak bad grammar off the stage; that its Talmas are at heart the saddest of all men; that its Meinna Schrodgers, with Weber's and Beethoven's smiles upon them, have been trained by privation; that its Adrienne Lecouvreur, smiling in "Monime," will die with grief for her abandonment by Maurice de Saxe; that its Roseval, laughing and singing, runs off the stage to tend a broken limb with a breaking heart—if, coming from behind the scenes, we recount these things, people call us satirical, though we have seen the smiles being manufactured, and the rouge laid on thick over hollow cheeks!

Sabretasche was quite right; it was a treat to hear Violet Molyneux's singing. Every person at the Puffdoff's house flocked out of conservatory, drawing-rooms, or cabinets de peinture, at the notes of her clear, rich, passionate, bell-like voice. We, just at that time barren of prime donne, had heard nothing like it of late; and Violet's voice was really one which, as a professional, would have ranked her very high. Besides, there was a tone in it, a certain freshness and gladness, mingled with a strange pathos and passion, which moved even those among her auditors most blasés, most fastidious, and most ready to sneer, into silence and admiration.

"That is music," said De Vigne, in the door of the music-room. "If she would sing at morning concerts I would forswear them no longer. Look at that fellow; if he be ever really caught at all, it will be by that voice."

I looked at that fellow, being Sabretasche, who leaned against the organ, close to Violet Molyneux; his face was calm and impassive as ever, but his melancholy eyes were fixed upon her with such intense earnestness, that Violet, glancing up at him as she sang, colored, despite all her self-possession, and her voice was unsteady for half a note.

Sabretasche noticed it perhaps, at least his eyes flashed out of their melancholy into the look which excited De Vigne's remark. It was quite true, Lauzun though the Colonel might be, I believe Violet's voice pleased him still more than her beauty. The latter beguiled the senses, as many others had before her; the former beguiled the soul, a far rarer charm for him.

"You came late; half our concert was over," said Violet to him, after luncheon, as they stood talking in a miniature winter-garden, one of the whims—and a very charming whim, too—of the Puffdoff's.

"I came in time to sing what I had promised, and to hear what I desired, your——"

"You did like it?" said Violet, looking up at his radiant eyes.

"Too well to compliment you on it. I 'liked' it as I liked, or rather I *felt* it—as I have felt, occasionally, the tender and holy beauty of Raphael, the impassioned tenderness of the 'Loves of Rimini,' the hushed glories of a summer night, the mystical chimes of a starlit sea. Your voice did me good, as those things did, until the feverish fret and noise of practical life wore off their influence again."

Violet gave a deep sigh of delight.

"You make me so happy! I often think that the doctrine of immortality has no better plea than the vague yearning for something unseen and unconceived, the unuttered desire which rises in us at the sound of true music. I have heard music at which I could have shed more bitter tears than any I have known, for I have had no sorrow, and which answered the restless passions of my heart better than any human mind that ever wrote."

"Quite true; and that is why, to me, music is one of the *strangest* gifts to man. Painting creates, but creates by

imitation. If a man imagine an angel, he must paint from the woman's face that he loves best—the Fornarina sat for the Madonna. If he paint a god, he must take a man for model; anything different from man would be grotesque. We never see a Jupiter or a Christ that is anything more than a fiercely-handsome, or a sadly-handsome, man. Music, on the contrary, creates from a spirit-world of its own: the fable of Orpheus and its lyre is not wholly a fable. In the passionate crash and tumult of an overture, in the tender pathos of one low tenor note, in the full swell of a Magnificat, in the low sigh of a Miserere, the human heart throws off the frippery and worry of the world, the nobler impulses, the softer charity, the unuttered aspirations, that are buried, yet still live, beneath so much that is garish and contemptible—wake up, and a man remembers all he is and all he might have been, and grieves, as the dwellers in Arcadia grieved over their exile, over his better nature lost.”

“Ah,” answered Violet, her gay spirits saddened by the tone in which Sabretasche, ordinarily so careless, light, nonchalant, and unruffled, spoke, “if we were always what we are in such moments how different would the world be! How ashamed we are of our petty quarrels and impulses, how far we are lifted from the rancor and the flitting trifles which mar all the beauty of human life! On the spur of such combined tranquillity and exaltation as music creates we are so much truer, so much nobler! We realize the temptations of others, we feel how little right we, with so much sin among us, have to dare to judge another. If human nature lasted what it is in its best moments, poets would have no need to fable of an Eden.”

Sabretasche looked down on her long and earnestly:

“Do you know that you are to me something as music is to you? When I am with you I am truer and better. I breathe a purer atmosphere. You make me for the time

being feel as I used to feel in my golden days. You bring me back enthusiasm, belief in human nature, noble aspirations, purer tastes, tenderer thoughts—in a word, you bring me back youth!"

Violet lifted her eyes to his, full of the happiness his words gave her. Sabretasche's hand rested on hers as she played with a West Indian creeper, clinging round the sides of a vase of myrtles. The color wavered in the Parian fairness of her face; her eyes and lips were tremulous with a vague sense of delight and expectation, but Sabretasche took his hand away with a short quick sigh, and set himself to bending the creeper into order.

There was a dead silence, a disappointed shadow stole unconsciously over Violet's tell-tale face. She looked up quickly:

"Why do you always talk of youth as a thing passed away from you? It is such folly. You are now in your best years."

"It is past and gone from my heart."

"But might it not have a resurrection?"

"It might, but it may not."

Violet mused a moment over the anomalous reply.

"What curse have you on you?" she said, involuntarily.

Sabretasche turned his eyes on her, filled with unutterable sadness:

"Do not rouse my demon; let him sleep while he can. But, Violet, when you hear about in the world of which you and I are both votaries—as hear you have done and will do—many tales of my past and my present, many reports and scandals circulated by my friends, believe them or not as you like by what you know of me; but believe, at the least, that I am neither so light-hearted nor so hard-hearted as they consider me. You are kind enough to honor me with your—your interest; you will

never guess how dearly I prize it; but there are things in my career which I cannot reveal to you, and against interest in me and my fate I warn you; it can bring you no happiness, for it can never go *beyond* friendship!"

It was a strange speech from a man to a woman, especially from a man famous for his conquests to a woman famous for her beauty!

He saw a shiver pass over Violet's form, and the delicate rose hue of her cheeks faded utterly. He sighed bitterly as he added, the blue veins rising in his calm white forehead:

"None to love me have I; I never had, I never may have!"

Great tears gathered slowly in Violet's eyes, and, despite all her self-control, fell down on the glowing petals of the West Indian flowers.

"But you will let me know more of you than any one else does?" she said, in a hurried, broken voice. "You will not, at least, forbid me your friendship?"

"Friendship—friendship!" repeated Sabretasche, with a strange smile. "You do not know what an idle word, what a treacherous salve, what a vain impossibility is friendship between men and women. Yet if you are willing to give me yours I will do my best to merit it, and to keep myself to it. Now let us go. I like too well to be with you to dare be with you long."

He gave her his arm, they lounged together into a cabinet de peinture, and criticised with the others a little Mieris newly added to the collection. Young ladies remark what high spirits Violet Molyneux has; too high, they think. Married women observe what a shocking flirt Vivian Sabretasche is; he is much more attentive to the Puffdoff than to Violet, whom he has been going after for the last two months, but evidently cares no more for than for his

soiled gloves. Mammās and chaperones inquire if they may congratulate Lady Molyneux on the rumors already afloat regarding her daughter's engagement to Colonel Sabretasche, and the Viscountess cries, "My dear Lady Fitzspy! that flirt? Heaven forefend! *He* may wish it, but *I*——And, besides, Violet's affections are most happily centered in a very different quarter." Whereat, the mammās and chaperones whose daughters have not sung so well at the amateur concert are disconcerted, knowing that the young Duke of Regalia is the *enfant de la maison* in Lowndes Square. So our friends use their lorgnons, and so much do they see of any of us, with all their skill at finesses, divination, and intrigues, spun on behind the backs of fans and down ivory parasol-handles.

II.

"L'AMITIÉ EST L'AMOUR SANS AILES."

"WHAT does Sabretasche mean with Molyneux's daughter?" said De Vigne to me in that same cabinet de peinture, De Vigne having only just escaped from the harpy's clutch of the little Countess's fairy fingers.

"How the devil should I tell? He's a confounded inconstant fellow, you know. He's always flirting with some woman or other."

"Flirtation doesn't make men look as he looked while he listened to her. Flirtation amuses. Sabretasche is not amused here, but rather, I should say, intensely worried."

"What should worry him? He could marry the girl if he wished."

"How can you tell?"

"Well, I suppose so. The Molyneux would let him

have her fast enough. Her mother wants to get her off; she don't like two milliners' bills in Regent Street and the Palais Royal. But *you* interesting yourself in a love affair! What a Saul among the prophets!"

"Spare your wit, Arthur. I never meddle with such tinder, I assure you. I am not over fond of my fellow-creatures, but I don't hate them intensely enough to help them to marry. I say, have you not been sufficiently bored here? The concert is over. Let us go, shall we?"

"With pleasure. I say, you have not paid your promised visit to little Tressillian. 'Tisn't far; we might walk over, eh?"

"So we will. Are you after poor Alma's chevelure dorée already?" laughed De Vigne. "Make her mistress of Longholme, Chevasney, and I'll give her away to you with pleasure. I won't be a party to other conditions, for her grandfather's sake—her guardian's sake, rather. By the way, I must make out whether she knows or not that the relationship was a myth."

"Thank you. I have no private reasons for proposing the call, except the always good and excellent one of passing the time and seeing a pretty woman. There is the Puffdoff coming after you again. Let's get away while we can."

We were soon out of that little bijou of a dower-house that shined the weeds and wiles of the late Puffdoff's handsome countess, and smoking our cigars, as we walked across to Richmond. We found her old nurse at the gate, a nice, neat, pleasant old woman, who told us Miss Alma, as she called her, was in-doors.

"Ah, sir, I remember you when you were a coming over to Weive Hurst when my poor dear master was alive, and in his own home, that those brutes took away from him. God forgive me for calling 'em so, but they were brutes,

with lies in their mouths and Bibles in their hands. When that cruel wretch Sir John Lacquers came down to stay with my master, when Miss Alma was little, he took my master to task for not having family sermons to read to the servants every night, and he was talking the whole time he was eating of his French dishes and drinking of his French wines—and didn't he like 'em, too, sir!—of the beauty of giving up the things of this world. But that's always the way with them that preach—they never practice, sir, never; and now they say that wretch is a living in France, sir, as grand as a duke, and that poor dear child is wearing her pretty eyes out. Don't let her do it, sir; pray don't!"

At which De Vigne laughed, and went into the house to see the poor dear child in question. He opened the door unannounced, for the best of all reasons that there was no one there to announce him. Alma was sitting at her easel, with her back to the door, painting earnestly, with little Sylvo at her side. She was dressed prettily, inexpensively I have no doubt, but somehow more picturesquely than many of the women in hundred guinea dresses and point worth a dowry—the picturesqueness of artistic taste, and innate refinement which gave her the brilliance and grace of a picture. She turned rapidly at the closing of the door, sprang up, and ran toward him with that rapidity and impulsiveness which always made her, in that respect, seem much younger than she was.

"Ah! you have come at last! I began to think you would cheat me as you cheated me of the yachting trip to Lorave; and yet I had faith in you. I thought you would not disappoint me."

"No; but I shall scold you," said De Vigne, "for sitting there, wearing your eyes out—as Mrs. Lee phrases it—over your easel. Why do you do it?"

"It is my only companion," pleaded Alma. "I like it so much. With my brush I can escape away into an ideal world, and shut out the real and actual, with all its harshness, trials, and privations. You know the sun shines only for me upon canvas; and besides," she added, with a gay smile, "to take a practical view of it, I have little or no money, and I must make what talent I have into gold."

"Poor little thing!" exclaimed De Vigne. Malgré lui, it struck him, who had flung about thousands at his pleasure ever since he was a boy, as so singular, and as somehow so unjust, that this girl, young as she was, should have to labor for her living with the genius with which nature had endowed her so royally—genius the divine, the god-giver, the signet-seal, so rare, so priceless, with which nature marks the few who are to ennoble and sanctify the mass.

"Ah! I am a poor little thing!" repeated Alma, with a moue mutine indicative of supreme pitié d'elle-même and indignation at her fate. "I should love society; I see nothing but nurse and Sylvo. I love fun; I have nobody to talk it to but the goldfinch. I hate solitude, and I am always alone. I should like beautiful music, beautiful pictures, gardens, statues, conservatories, luxuries, all the agréments of life. This quiet life is not at all my rôle; I vegetate in it."

"More honor to you to bear it so well, Miss Tressilian," said I.

"Oh, I don't bear it well," interrupted Alma. "I sometimes get as impatient as a bird beating its wings against a cage; I grow as restless in its monotony as you can fancy; I want to enjoy myself. So I am not a bit of a philosopher, and never shall be."

"Life will make you one in spite of yourself," said De Vigne.

"Never! If I ever come to rose-leaves, I will lie down on them coûte que coûte. As long as I can only get a straw mattress, there is not much virtue in renunciation."

"But there are cankerous worms in rose-leaves," smiled De Vigne.

"But who would ever enjoy the roses if they were always remembering that? Where is the good?"

"You little epicurean!" laughed De Vigne, looking at her amusedly. His remembrance of her as a child made him treat her with a certain gentle familiarity, very different to his usual sarcastic hauteur with young ladies of her age. "You would have a brief summer like the butterfly lies dying on the brown autumn leaves, and envies the bee housed safely at home."

"N'importe!" cried the little lady, recklessly. "The butterfly, at least, has enjoyed life, and the bee, I would bet, goes on humming and bustling all the year round, never knowing whether the fuchsias are red or white, as long as there is honey in them; only looking in orchises with an eye to business, and never giving a minute in his breathless toil to scent the heliotropes or kiss the blue-bells for their beauty's sake."

"Possibly not; but when the fuchsias and orchises, blue-bells and heliotropes, are withered and dried, and raked away by ruthless gardeners for the unpoetic destiny of making leaf mould, and the ground is frozen, and the trees are bare, and the wind whistles over the snow—how then? Which is best off, butterfly or bee!"

"Hold your tongue!" laughed Alma. "You put me in mind of those horrible moral apologues, and that detestable incitement to supreme selfishness, 'La cigale ayant chanté tout l'été,' where the ant is made out a most praiseworthy person, but appears to me simply cruel and mean."

But to answer you is easy enough. What good does the bee get from his hard work? Has his honey taken away from him for other people's eating, and is smoked out of his house, poor little thing, by human monsters, whom, if he knew his power, he could sting to death! The butterfly, au contraire, enjoys himself to the last, dies in the course of nature, and leaves others to enjoy themselves after him."

"You did not lose your tongue in Lorave, Alma?" said De Vigne, with a grave air of solicitous interest.

With the little Tressillian he had a little of his old fun, something of his old laugh.

"No, indeed; and I should be very sorry if I had, for I love talking."

"You need not tell us that," smiled De Vigne.

"I will never talk to you again," cried Alma, with supreme dignity; "or, rather, I never would if I were not too magnanimous to avenge an insult by such enormous punishment."

"To yourself. Just so. You are quite right," said De Vigne, with an amused smile. "I only know one young lady who can equal you in that line, and she is your St. James's Street friend, Miss Molyneux."

"Ah! she would like talking, by her face; and she must talk well, too."

"Yes. Something in your style; as vehement and effervescent as a glass of champagne, and as fast as a twenty minutes' burst, up wind."

"Do you admire her?" asked Alma, quickly.

"Certainly. All men must. She is very lovely."

"Yes; it is a face to dream of. And she must be very happy," added Alma, with a sigh of envy.

"I dare say she is; she looks so."

"Have you seen her to-day?"

"Yes. Chevasney and I are just come from a *matinée musicale* at Twickenham, where she was the *lionne*."

"How I wish I were in your society," cried Alma, passionately.

"I wish you were," said De Vigne. "You are not made for solitude, nor to derive any pleasure from 'blushing unseen,' and 'wasting your sweetness on the desert air.' You are a true woman, I guess, Alma, and would enjoy shining, scintillating, slaying, and conquering. All women do who can, and those who cannot make a virtue of necessity, and renounce the admiration that refuses to come to them with as good a grace as they can muster; but they long for it all the same. But take courage, *petite*. You were born in that society—you will shine in it some day, I make no doubt."

"If I could make a name like Rosa Bonheur, I might, and then you would admire me as much as you do Miss Molyneux."

De Vigne laughed.

"What are you painting now, Alma? May we see?"

"I was drawing you," she answered, tranquilly, turning the easel toward him.

It was a really wonderful likeness from memory, done in pastels. She had admirably caught the high-bred and severe beauty of his face, and she had caught, what was much more difficult, the calm hauteur of his features, the suppressed passions, veiled under impenetrable reserve, which slumbered in his eyes, while there yet lingered round the grave proud lines of his mouth a shadow of the smile which now came so rarely there, but when it did, gave the lie to the coldness of its expression in repose.

"My likeness! By Jove!" cried De Vigne; "you flatter me shockingly, Alma. What on earth put it into your *head, petite*, to do that?"

"I knew you would make a splendid picture—your face is beautiful," said Alma, tranquilly.

Whereupon De Vigne went straight off into a fit of laughter, the first real, cordially amused laughter, with a touch of the old merry ring in it, that I had heard since his marriage-day.

"Why do you laugh?" said Alma, indignantly; "I only tell you the truth. Your face is perfect by the rules of art."

At which gratifying assurance De Vigne laughed still more. The girl amused him, as Richelieu's and Montaigne's little cats amused them when they laid down the scepter and the pen and tied the string to their kittens' cork. And thinking of her still merely as Tressillian's little granddaughter, he was not on his guard with her as with other women, and treated her with a cordiality and freedom more like his old than his present manners. For De Vigne was a true gentleman, every inch of him; and where he might have been careless and distant to Violet Molyneux, an aristocratic belle, he was carefully courteous and kind to Alma Tressillian, poor, unprotected, and working for her own livelihood.

"Well, Alma, I am extremely obliged to you. You have made a much handsomer fellow of me than Maclise would have done, I am afraid," said he, smiling; "and if ever my picture is wanted side by side with Wellington's, I hope, for the sake of creating an impression on posterity, that you will be kind enough to paint it for me."

"It is no handsomer than you are yourself," said Alma, resolute to maintain her own opinion; "is it, Captain Chevasney? It is too bad of you to laugh so, but that is just like your sex's ingratitude."

"Don't abuse us," said De Vigne; "that is so stale a stage-trick with women. They are eternally running after

us, and eternally vowing that they would not stir a step for any of us. They spend their whole existence in trying to catch us, but their whole breath reiterating that they only take us out of compassion. If I hear a lady abuse or find fault with us, I know that her grapes 'sont trop verts, et bons pour des goujats.'"

Alma laughed:

"Very probably. But I don't abuse you. Au contraire, I prefer gentlemen to my own sex; and I have a right, for I have had much more kindness from them. I prefer them, too, for many other things. Your code of honor is far better than ours."

"The generality of women have no notion of honor at all," said De Vigne; "they tell falsehoods and circulate scandals without being called to account for it, and the laxity of honor in trifles that they learn in the nursery and school-rooms corrodes their sense of right toward others in all their after-life. Men err very often from passion and ambition, or high temper; but women's faults almost always spring from petty motives: spite, malice, love of outshining their neighbor, pleasure in small intrigues, jealousy of prettier rivals. Their sphere is little, their vices and their vanities are little likewise. A boy at school is soon taught that, however lax he may be in other things, it is 'sneaky' to peach, and learns a rough sort of Spartan honor; a girl, on the contrary, tells tales of her sisters unproved, and hears mamma in her drawing-room take away the character of a 'dearest friend' whom she sees her meet the next moment with a caress and an endearment. But modern society is too 'religious' to remember to be honorable, and is too occupied with proclaiming its 'morality' to have any time to give to common honesty."

"As Sir John Lacquers taught us!"

"Sir John Lacquers and scores like him, whose 'slips

are passed over because their scrip is inscribed with a large text, and pilgrim's purse full of almighty dollars. I think of publishing a 'Manual of Early Lessons for Eminent Christians:' I. Do good so that not only your right hand knows it, but all your neighborhood likewise. II. Give as it shall be given unto you, and not unless you know it will be. III. Strain very hard at a sin the size of a gnat if it be your poor relation's, and swallow one the size of a camel if it be your patron's. IV. Never pray in your closet, as no one will be the wiser, but go as high as you can on the house-top, that society may think you the holiest man in Israel. V. Borrow of your friend without paying him, because he will not harm you, but be careful to give good interest to strangers, because they may have the law on you. VI. Judge very severely, that gaining applause for your condemnation of others you may contrive to hide your own shortcomings. VII. Eat pâtés de foie gras in secrecy, but have jours maigres in public, that men who cannot see you in secret may reward you openly. I could write a whole paraphrase of the Gospel as used and translated by the 'Church of England,' and other elect of the kingdom of Heaven; an election, by the way, exceedingly like that of Themistocles, where every man writes down his own name first, entirely regardless of lack of right or qualification for the honor."

"But different in this respect," said Alma, "that there the generals *did* remember to put Themistocles after them, whereas the shining lights of the different creeds are a great deal too occupied with securing their own future comfort to think of drawing any of their confreres up with them. The churches all take a cross for their symbol; they would be nearer the truth if they took the beam without the transverse, for egotism is much nearer their point than self-sacrifice. But will you look at my pet picture?"

I know I need not ask *you* to tell me candidly what you like and don't like in it."

The picture she spoke of stood with its face to the wall. As she turned it round, De Vigne and I gave an involuntary exclamation of surprise, it so far surpassed anything we should have fancied a girl of her age could have accomplished. It was in water-colors, but her master had been one of the first artists in Rome, and she had acquired under him a brilliance and delicacy of finish rarely seen. The picture was one not possible to criticise chilly by exacting rules of art and of perspective. One looked at it as Murillo looked at the first Madonna of his wonderful mulatto, not to discuss critically, but to admire the genius stamped upon it, to admire the vivid breathing vitality, the delicate grace, and wonderful power marked upon its canvas.

De Vigne looked at it silently while Alma spoke; he continued silent some minutes after she had ceased. He was not rassotté of art as Sabretasche was, but he was passionately fond of talent wherever he found it, and he was a good judge of painting; no one could have imposed a mediocre thing upon him. He stood silently, as I say, looking at her work; then he turned suddenly:

"Alma, if you choose, you can be as great a woman as Elizabeth Sirani—a greater than Rosa Bonheur, because what she gives to horses and cows you will give to human nature. Be content. Whatever sorrows or privations come to you, you will have God's best gift, which no man can take away, the greatest prize in life—genius!"

Alma looked up at him, her blue eyes brilliant as diamonds and dark as a summer sky at midnight, her whole face flushed, her lips trembling with delight.

"You think so. Thank God! I would have died to hear you say that!"

"Better live to prove it," said De Vigne, mournfully. Her enthusiasm struck a sad chord in his heart. "Your picture is both well conceived and well carried out; it tells its own story; the imagining of it is poetic, the treatment artistic. There are faults, no doubt, but I like it too well to look out for them, and for your age I regard it as a marvel. Will you let me have it at my house a little while? I have some friends who are artists, others who are really learned cognoscenti, and I should like to hear their opinion on it."

"Will you keep it?" asked Alma, with the first shyness I had seen in her. "If you would hang it anywhere in your house—an attic, or anything—and just look at it now and then, I shall be so glad. Will you?"

"I will keep it with pleasure, my dear child," answered De Vigne, with a surprised smile; "but I will keep it as I would Landseer's, or Mulready's, by being allowed the pleasure of adding it to my collection. Your picture is worth——"

"Oh, don't talk of 'worth!'" cried Alma, vehemently. "Take it—take it, as I give it to you, with all my heart. I am so glad to give you anything, you were so kind to *him!*"

And at the remembrance of her grandfather poor little Alma leaned against her easel, covered her bright eyes with her hands, and sobbed aloud, unrestrainedly, and passionately, like her nature. She was too instinctively well-bred, however, not to do her best to suppress them, and, brushing away her tears, she looked up at De Vigne.

"Don't be angry with me, I can't help it when I think of grandpapa; he loved me so much, and I have nobody to love me now. Did he say anything in his letter that I might hear?"

De Vigne turned quickly:

"*Did you not read it?* It was unsealed."

"Read it? No! Why, it was addressed to you. You could not think for a moment that another person's letter was less sacred to me because it happened to be unsealed! That is not your own code, I should say. What right have you to suppose me more dishonorable than yourself?"

Her eyes sparkled dangerously, the color was hot in her cheeks, the imputation had roused her spirit, and really her fiery indignation was as becoming as it was amusing.

"I beg your pardon. I was wrong," said De Vigne. "You have a man's sense of honor, not a woman's. I am glad of it. Your grandpapa says very little. You say he died on the morning of the 10th of May; my letter was written on the evening of the 9th, and his powers failed him before he finished it. It was merely to ask me if I met you to be your friend. It is little enough I can ever aid you in, and my friendship will be of little use to you, but, such as it is, it will be yours, if you like to take it."

She held her hand out to him by way of answer; there were too many tears in her voice for her to trust herself to say anything.

"You do not remember your parents at all?" asked De Vigne.

She shook her head:

"I remember no one but grandpapa, and no home but Weive Hurst. Sometimes I have a sort of memory of a woman with fair hair, whom I called mamma, but whom I was afraid of, and of a place not unlike Lorave, with myrtles and orange-trees; but it must be only the memory of a dream, I think, for nurse told me both papa and mamma died when I was a baby, and that grandpapa could never bear me to mention them to him: I don't know why. How happy I was at Weive Hurst! I wonder if I shall ever be like that again?"

"To be sure you will," said De Vigne, kindly. "You have a capacity for happiness, and are gay under heavy

clouds; at eighteen no one has said good-by to all the sunshine of life. I must say good-by, though, or I shall not be back in town in time for mess. The hours slip away fast in chat; but promise me one thing, that, till I see you again, you will not ruin your eyesight over that easel before and after it is light. Only paint while the day is bright; you will do yourself more injury than you dream of in that over-close application. Walk every day that is fine, and give yourself some hours of *délassement*. You are fond of reading?"

"Passionately; but I read so much as a child, that I am almost blasée de littérature. I seem to have read, in English, French, and Italian, all that is really worth reading—all that is now in my reach at least, for now the rare old works and the best modern are not attainable, for the circulating libraries do not keep them. I am very fond of the French memoirs. What is more amusing than Saint-Simon and De Montespan? And I like metaphysical and psychological works—Buckle's, and Bain's, and Stuart Mill's."

De Vigne smiled. "As your taste, like your notions of honor, are a man's and not a woman's, and somehow resemble mine, perhaps my library can suit you better than the circulating ones. We will see! And now good-by, Miss Tressillian."

"Don't call me Miss Tressillian, pray," cried Alma, plaintively; "that is something quite new, and very horrible; everybody calls me Alma, and so must you. Good-by, and thank you much. Don't go and see Miss Molyneux and forget all about me. She has plenty of friends, you know, and I have none."

"That little Tressillian is charming," said I, as we left the house. "Don't you think her very amusing?"

"Yes," said De Vigne, with a smile, "it does amuse one

to hear her ; it is refreshing, after the vapid inanities and limited intelligence of 'finished' young ladies, to find a little thing who can talk and think like that. She is perfectly original, certainly, and it is a pity there are not more of the stamp."

"I like her," said I, "because she has the gayety, frankness, and abandon of a child, with the quick wit, satire, and knowledge of a woman of the world, and that union is uncommonly rare. I wish there were more women like Victor Hugo's friend, '*Homme par la pensée et femme par le cœur.*' The mistake they always make is, in imagining their education finished when in truth it has only just begun. What a girl learns up to sixteen or seventeen is only the merest A B C of knowledge. They are not allowed to read this, because it is 'improper;' nor that, because it is 'irreligious;' nor the other, because it is 'not fit for young persons;' till the result is, that they read nothing—great writers not being exactly accustomed to suppress their opinions, mince their words, and shut out human nature, to suit the capacities of school-girls or the pruderies of school-mistresses. If their education is so limited, how should their minds choose but be limited also? Give me a woman like our little friend yonder, who has something of our own range of studies and ideas, to whom one can talk on equal terms, and not have to go down from all subjects of interest, or value, to the gathering together of on dits and the consideration of bagatelles, as uninteresting as they are unimproving."

"Little Alma makes you quite eloquent," said De Vigne, smiling. "I fully agree with you, if women were more capable of participation in our thoughts and studies, we should not seek their society as we now do, only to make love to them. Women complain that their husbands, and *brothers*, and fathers, leave them for clubs and men's

society. The fault lies chiefly in themselves. It is only a lover, and only then one in the first 'rosy flush' of enchantment, who does not weary of soft lips that can only utter monosyllables, and almond eyes that can only look a vacuous 'Plait-il ?' to all his allusions. Alma is original; the worse for her, poor child ! Women will hate, and men take advantage of her ; if she were in society, our sex would go mad *about* her, and her own mad *against* her. I wonder what will become of her. I doubt if she will be happy ; your exceptional natures scarcely ever are, though certainly she is lively enough under difficulties, with none of the amusements natural to her age. I wish you'd marry her, Arthur—it would be such a kindness. And yet I wouldn't ask you such a sacrifice, you're too good for a married man."

"Bien obligé, I never intend to be ; but if I ever should, I hope my wife would not look on you with such admiring eyes as Alma does."

He laughed. "My dear fellow ! do you expect to have a Guenevere who has no Lancelot ? I shouldn't have thought you so Quixotic. If ever you marry, you must make up your mind to play second ; and if your wife has no more harmful penchant than the little Tressillian's will ever be for me, you may congratulate yourself indeed !"

The morning after, while De Vigne was breakfasting, the cart that brought in Mrs. Lee's home-made bread to town left at his house Alma's picture ; she had looked, I suppose, for his address in the Court Guide, and remembered her promise, though I am afraid the recipient of her gift had forgotten the subject altogether.

When it came, however, he hung it in a good light, and pointed it out to Sabretasche, who dined with him that night, to meet a mutual Paris friend.

"What do you think of that picture, Colonel ?" he said,

as we came into the drawing-room for a rubber. Whist was no great favorite with De Vigne; he preferred the rapidity and exciting whirl of loo or lansquenet; but he played it well, and Sabretasche and De Cassagnac were especially fond of it. It suited the Colonel to lean back in a soft chair, and make those calm, subtle combinations. He said the game was so deliciously tranquil and silent!

Sabretasche set down his coffee-cup, put his glass in his eye, and lounged up to it.

"Of this water-color? I like it exceedingly. Where did you get it? It is not the style of any one I know; it is more like one of your countrymen's, Cassagnac, eh? It wants toning down; the light through that stained window is a trifle too bright, but the boy's face is perfect. I would give something to have idealized it; and the hair is as soft as silk. I like it extremely, De Vigne. Where did you get it?"

"I picked it up by accident. It pleased my eye, and I wanted to know if my eye led me right. I know you are a great connoisseur of those things."

"There is true power in it, and an exquisite delicacy of touch. The artist is young, isn't he? Do you know him?"

"Slightly. He works for his livelihood, and is only eighteen."

"Eighteen? By Jove! if the boy goes on as he has begun he will beat Maclise and Ingres. Has he ever tried his hand at oils?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"It's a pity he shouldn't. He works for his livelihood, you say? If he will do me a picture as good as this, leaving the subject to himself, I will give him fifty guineas for it, if he thinks that sufficient. Some day, when we have nothing better to do, you will take me to his studio—a

garret in Poland Street, probably, is it not? Those poor devils! How they live on bread and cheese and a pipe of bird's-eye, I cannot conceive! If the time ever come when I have my turbot and hock no longer, I shall resort to an overdose of morphia. What is the value of life when life is no longer enjoyment?"

"Yet," suggested De Vigne, "if only those were alive who enjoyed living, the earth would be barren very speedily, I fancy."

"That depends on how you read enjoyment," said De Cassagnac.

"Enjoyment is easily enough defined—taking pleasure in things, and having things in which to take pleasure. Some men have the power to enjoy, and not the opportunity; others the opportunity, and not the power; the combination of both makes the enjoyment, I take it."

"But enjoyment is a very different thing to different men. Enjoyment, for Sabretasche, lies in soirées, like the Gore House, or Madame de Sablé's, wine as good as your claret, women as pretty as La Violette, good music, good painting, and immeasurable dolce. Enjoyment lies, for Professor Owen, in the fossil tooth of an ichthyosaurus; for an Italian lazzarone, in sun, dirt, and macaroni; for a woman, in dress, conquests, and tall footmen; for the Tipton Slasher, in the belt, undisputed: enjoyments are as myriad as the stars."

"I know what you mean, my dear fellow," said Sabretasche, dropping his eye-glass, and taking up his cup again. "You mean that Hodge, the bricklayer, goes home covered with whitewash, sits down to Dutch cheese, with the brats screaming about, with the same relish as I sit down to my very best-served dinner. It is true, so far, that I should rather be in purgatory than in whitewash, should turn sick at the cheese, murder the children, and kill my own self

afterward, and that Hodge, by dint of habit and blunted senses, can support life where I should end it in pure self-defense. But I do not believe that Hodge enjoys himself—how should he, poor wretch! with not a single agrément of life? He does not know all he misses, and he is not much better than the beast of the field; but at the same time he only endures life, he can't be said to enjoy it. I agree with De Vigne, that there is but one definition of enjoyment, and the 'two handfuls, with quiet and contentment of spirit,' is a poetic myth, for poverty and enjoyment can by no means ever run in tandem."

"And contentment is another myth," added De Vigne. "If a man has all he wants, he is contented, because he has no wish beyond, and is a happy man; if he has not what he wants, and is conscious of something lacking, he cannot be called contented, for he is not so."

"Just so. I don't look to be contented, that is not in the lot of man; all I ask are the agréments and refinements of life, and without them life is a curse. Neither Diogenes, limiting himself to cabbages and water, nor Alexander, drunk with the conquest of the empires, were one bit more contented at heart than the other. Discontent prompted the one to quit mankind and cast off wealth, the other to rule mankind and amass wealth."

"And, after all, there is no virtue in contentment, since contentment is satisfaction in one's lot; there is far more virtue in endurance—strong, manful, steady endurance—of a fate that is adverse, and one admits to be such, but against which one still fights hard. Patience is all very well, but pluck is better," said De Vigne. "The tables are set. Shall we cut for partners? You and Cassagnac! Chevasney and I may give ourselves up for lost!"

"I am fond of Sabretasche," said De Vigne, as the Colonel and De Cassagnac left, about twelve, the former to

keep a promise he had made to Violet Molyneux to attend her mother's soirée that evening—the singular intercourse between them, and that strange compact, “not to go beyond friendship,” had only served to draw them nearer to friendship's deadliest foe, and the hours they passed asunder began to grow dangerously wearisome to one, if not to both. “I am fond of Sabretasche. There's a wonderful charm about that fellow; he makes one like him, though he would make out that he likes no one. Say what he will, there is a nobility and generosity at bottom that one can always trust. He does hate trouble; but I never went to him yet to exert himself to help anybody but what he did it—did it as I like people to do things, not ostentatiously, but quietly and liberally. It was he, you know, who helped me to get poor old Tressillian's consulship; and didn't you notice his first impulse, when he thought my young artist wanted money, was to give an order, though, with his Giorgiones and Claudes, of course he no more wants a little water-color than this retriever. People call him a raffiné voluptuary, a profound egotist, and all the rest of it. Bah! I only wish his detractors were one-half as reliable, as generous-hearted, and as delicate in generosity as he is. Il fait la vie, il s'amuse, as Cassagnac would say; but I know, if I were down in the world and wanted help, if I wished for a gift given by the right hand and not known by the left, if I needed a man of honor who would tell me no lies and betray me no confidence, to which I would rather go—to Sabretasche, though he may be a mauvais sujet, or my Lord Savinggrace, though he is a model of piety. But then Sabretasche, though he never pretends to be moral, does remember to be a man of honor, which your very moral and immaculate gentlemen singularly often forget.”

“True enough! The Colonel would make himself out.

the perfection of egotism, but I have often known him thinking and acting for others, with a kindness and unselfishness very rare in this world. Do you remember the trouble he took, when little Duncombe was in that mess about his money, to get the boy out of the Jews' hands and have him gently handled? and yet, if there is a thing Sabretasche hates, it is business matters of any kind, or contact with the under-bred canaille of the world. Like you, I am fond of the Colonel, as women say; but I often fancy he is not a happy man—don't you?"

"Happy," repeated De Vigne, with a stir of his fire. "No, I don't suppose he is; few men are. The one-half spoil life, the other half are spoiled by life; some are strangled by an adverse position, from which they cannot escape; others, born with the fairest prospects, mar them by their own self-will, folly, or vice. As for Sabretasche, I dare say, if you asked most people, they would tell you he is the *bien aimé* of fortune, if ever a man was; so he would seem, leader of ton, wit, critic par excellence as he is, with his talent and his taste, his *bonnes fortunes* and his wealth. But I dare say, if we knew all about him, there are pages doubled down in his life that he wouldn't care to have reopened, and has done follies in his past years that still cling to his present. There are sure to be; no man going is without some dark score or other, often written down for him by others' hands, to which he would not willingly refer. Sabretasche is no exception to the rule, most likely, and no thoughtful man can live to forty without being saddened to a certain degree, if it were only by the trickery and artifice he sees going on around him in all grades and under all colors, and Sabretasche, indolent though he may be, sees very keenly through his eyeglass."

"Which you won't allow to light on the little Tressillian,

eh? Why did you let him go off in the idea it was a young artist in Poland Street?"

"Less for Sabretasche himself than all the others," responded De Vigne; "though, to be sure, with those *bonnes fortunes* of his I spoke of just now, and certain stories we know of him, little Alma is probably better without his acquaintance than with it."

"Hallo! if we go by *bonnes fortunes* and such-like reputations, are you a much more eligible friend for her than the Colonel?"

"Not at all. I have been no saint, God knows; *en même temps*, I am, thank Heaven, a man of honor, and with the trust Tressillian, of whom Sabretasche knew nothing, placed in me when he wrote that letter, and my knowledge of him in my boyhood, to say nothing of her own guilelessness and unprotected position, the child would be as safe with me as with her brother, even if I had not done with love and all its madness."

Done with love at thirty-five! But De Vigne meant what he said fully, at the least then: he meant and he believed it. He had vowed never to surrender himself to even a passing taste of that delirium which had already cost him so much, and meant to devote his life to the Service, which he had loved from the day he entered it, and which could alone give him the excitement and the action he coveted. Done with love at thirty-five! I looked at him as the fire-light shone on his face, with its haughty lines and its passionate eyes, and I thought he would one day reap the folly of his defiance, as he had already done of his surrender to the passion he now renounced. He did not think much about the little Tressillian, possibly; still she was to a degree a source of interest to him; she appealed to his kindness and his generosity, the only two levers by which De Vigne, so long won by his eye and his passions and his im-

pulses, was now to be moved. Boughton Tressillian had been kind to him in his boyhood, it would have been impossible to his nature not to have returned the kindness to Boughton Tressillian's little pet, now that the once heiress of Weive Hurst was moneyless, forsaken, friendless, and all alone in the world, dependent, poor child, upon her own exertions for a livelihood, and exposed to all the peines fortes et dures of poverty. Alma was calculated to disarm him, too. He never thought of her as what she really was, a most fascinating woman, but as what she really was too, a playful, winning child, familiarly fond of him from gratitude and memory, but gifted with an intelligence so singularly deep, keen, liberal, and cultured, that absolutely in talking to her he forgot her sex, and spoke to her and listened to her as he would have done to any man who chanced to have a turn of mind and a liberality of opinion akin to his own. To the line of Victor Hugo, which I already applied to Alma, "Homme par la pensée et femme par le cœur," one might have added, "et enfant par la franchise de l'esprit et l'abandon de la gaité." She was lively as one of her own pet kittens; she had all that elasticity of spirit, that wildness of gayety, which it is a great error to suppose do not very generally accompany intellects clearer and hearts deeper than those of the common herd; and lively as she was in her triste and uncongenial life, she would have been joyous indeed in a happy one, such as most girls at her early age lead. This in itself was the greatest attraction to De Vigne; his own nature was joyous, his spirits high, till they were crushed and chilled by his fatal marriage; he had that *love of fun* in him which is latent in all sweet and anti-morbid characters; he liked life and spirit in his dogs, his horses, in everything; he liked them especially in women, whom he had always sought in proportion as they amused him. Alma's vivacity amused him

and refreshed him; and where he had been amused, De Vigne had always gone, without any thought of possible consequences to himself.

He went to see her three or four times. Once he stopped there en route to lunch at the Star and Garter; once he went to go over Strawberry Hill with her, amused with the romantic souvenirs she poured into his ear; once or twice he went over to see her in the early noon. Whenever he had been in town he had been in the habit of spending an hour or two occasionally in Richmond Park or Windsor Forest in the morning, to have a snatch of the fresh woodland air amidst the hurry and heat of the season; and seven miles was soon covered with his slashing stride, that had carried him across the Himalayas and the Pyrenees, up the Tyrol, and over the Col du Géant. About a month after we had chanced on the little Tressillian, the day looked sunny and bright, and when he had done his breakfast and his *Times*, De Vigne, who was fond of walking, took his stick, whistled his terriers, and walked across to Richmond before any of his set were up, or, at least, *visible*, thinking to himself he would go and see the little Tressillian. At the gate he met her, just coming out of the garden.

"Going for a walk?" asked De Vigne, as Alma welcomed him with that cordial épanchement du cœur natural to her with those whom she liked and was pleased to see.

"Yes, I was; but that is no consequence, and certainly no deprivation, this cold day. Do come in and talk to me."

"No, thank you; I will walk and talk with you, if you like. I was going to take a look at the park after I had asked you how you were, so we can go together."

They did go together. Alma delighted to have him for her companion; and very naturally, too, for there were few women in town, however admired and supercilious, who

would not have liked two hours' tête-à-tête with De Vigne, though few would have shown it him so innocently and naturally. Alma, though with her Southern blood and her Lorave habits she did not admire walking in cold weather, enjoyed herself this morning, with the dogs scampering before her and De Vigne talking to her, while the wind blew a bright rose-color into her cheeks, and her dark-blue eyes beamed with the amusement and gladness inherent in her nature.

"Are you not very dull here, Alma?" he asked her, as they walked along through the park.

"Yes. I am not of a sufficiently superior mind to see the charms of solitude," she answered, laughing. "I am tired of the life I lead. I admit it fully, though I suppose if I were philosophic I should not yearn after the pomps and vanities, *alias* the refinements and the pleasures, of existence. My days are monotonous. I cannot tell one from the other. I have no friends, no amusements, no society, nor can I obtain them in any way. I cannot make a fortune all at once. I cannot run up to some grande dame, and say to her, 'Introduce me into your circle; I want to belong to the crème de la crème.' I cannot free myself any more than a goldfinch caught and caged can free itself, and go back to its beloved chestnut boughs. Yes, Major De Vigne, I am very dull—I admit it—except, indeed, when you come to see me."

"Poor little thing!" said De Vigne, involuntarily, as he pushed some brambles out of her path with his cane. "Well, you have read Monte Christo! You must remember his last words."

"'Attendre et espérer?'" repeated Alma. "To me they are the saddest words in human language. They are so seldom the joy-bells to herald a new future—they are so often the death-knell to a past wasted in futile striving and

disappointed desire. 'Attendre et espérer!' How many beaux jours pass in trusting to those words; and when their trust be at last recompensed, how often the fulfillment comes too late to be enjoyed. It always irritates me to hear people say it is good for youth to bear privation; they can repose in their old age. Do those moralists never stop to remember what it is to have your youth marred by adverse circumstances, cramped by straitened means, passing away from you?—all your beaux jours, all the spring-time of your life, passing away without your being allowed to gather one of the flowers growing by its highway, gliding from your hands unblessed, unenjoyed, without a single glimpse of that insouciant gladness which seems its heritage—gliding, never to return? 'Attendre et espérer!' Ah! that is all very well for those who have some fixed goal in view—some aim which they will attain if they have but energy and patience enough to go steadily on to the end; but only to wait for an indefinite better fate, which year after year retreats still farther—only to hope against hope for what never comes, and in all probability will never come—*that* is not quite so easy."

"If it is not, it is the lot of all," answered De Vigne. "However favored by fortune, take my word for it, no man's or woman's life turns out in any way what they dreamt and wished it in their première jeunesse. The young beauty at eighteen or twenty, entering the world with all her ideals hot-pressed from the leaves of Jocelyn or Evangeline, dreams of some romantic and love-blessed future, and, a season or two afterward, ends in a marriage for position. In tender moments afterward, no doubt she will now and then recall those by-gone idyls of her girlhood with a sigh."

"But her fate is of her own carving," interrupted Alma. "She cannot charge life with the result of her own actions and ambitions."

"That does not follow. Education, custom, surroundings, the bias of her birth, the incitements of her friends, may all have had a good deal to do with it. But I was going to say that, though she may sigh—on the eternal principle that a bunch of currants we cannot have seems sweeter than a cluster of the finest hot-house grapes à la main—for the unfulfilled desires and visions of her youth, it is a great doubt whether she would have been a quarter so happy if they had been fulfilled. A love-match and a limited income would have banished her fancy for romance quite as effectually and more painfully than the entourages of wealth, prosaic though they may seem to you. But as for your *attendre et espérer*, I agree with you, nothing chafes and frets one more than waiting; it wears all the bloom off the fruit to waste all our golden hours gazing at it afar off, and longing for it with Tantalus thirst. It has never suited me. I have too often brushed the bloom off mine plucking them too soon; and, as for hope, she may figure well in Collins's ode; but as we go on in life, we know there is nothing more delusive than the flutter of her shadowy wings, which lead us on as the Willis of the German legends lure men, with their silvery hair and sylphide forms, to dance on the very border of their tombs. I agree with you, to wait for happiness is a living death, to hope for it is a dreamer's phantasy; but it is not like *your* usual doctrine, you little enthusiast, who are still such a child that you believe in the possible realization of all your fond ideals. What were you saying to me the other day at Strawberry Hill about Chatterton, that if the poor boy had only had the courage to wait and hope, he might have reaped long years of honor and of fame?"

"But Chatterton had an aim; and he had more: he had the godlike gift of genius, which gives to the hearts of all signaled by its touch a beauty and a glory that no wrong,

no trial, no suffering can ever take away. I know he was goaded to madness by poverty. I know how bitter to that boy, with his fervid imaginings, his poet's longings, his beautiful day-dreams, must have been the weary fret of thinking what he should eat, and wherewithal he should be clothed, the jar and grind of every-day wants, of petty yet inexorable cares, so wearing even to most common and the most narrowed minds. I can well believe how they wore into his soul and bowed his young head down to the grave, as the only home that would open for him to rest from the cruel wear and jar of the world, that seemed so cold to him. At the same time, I wonder that he did not live for his works; that for their sake he did not suffer and endure; that the strong genius in him did not give him power and courage to struggle against all that strove to crush it; that he did not live to make the world acknowledge all that marked him out from the common herd. I know how he wearied of life; yet I wish he had conquered it. It always makes me sad to think that genius should be trampled down by the injustice and the petty cruelties of the world. Genius should ever be stronger than its detractors. 'What is the use of my writing poetry that no one reads?' asked Shelley. Yet he knew that the time would come when it would be read by men wiser than those of his generation, and he wrote on, following the inspiration of his own divine gift. Men know and acknowledge now *how* divine a gift it was."

"True," answered De Vigne; "wrestle with fate, and it will bless you, is a wise and a right counsel; still here and there in that wrestling-match it is possible to get a *croc en jambe*, which leaves us at the mercy of Fate, do what we may to resist her. Men of genius have very rarely been appreciated in their own time. Too often nations spend wealth upon a monument to him whom they let die for

want of a shilling. Too many, like Cervantes, have lacked bread while they penned what served to make their country honored and illustrious. They could write of him :

Porque se digna qua uno mano herida
Pudo dar à su dueño eterna vida ;

but they could leave him to poverty for all that. Johnson must dine behind the screen, while Beau Nash reigns King of the Wells. It must ever be so, as long as the world is divided as it is into twenty who like ombre and basset, small-talk and shoe-buckles, to only one here and there who cares for satire and wisdom. A prophet has no honor in his own country, still less in his own time ; but if the prophets be true and wise men, they will not look for honor, but follow Philip Sydney's counsel, look in their own hearts and write, and leave the seed of their brain as plowmen the corn in the furrows—content that it will bring forth a harvest at the last, if it be ripe, good wheat."

"Yet it is sad if they are forced to see only the dark and barren earth, and the golden harvest only rise to wave over their tomb!"

"It is ; but, petite, there are few things *not* sad in life, and one of the saddest of them is, as Emerson says, 'the madness with which the passing age mischooses the object on which all candles shine and all eyes are turned,' registering every trifle touching Elizabeth, and Leicester, and Essex, and passing over, without a note, 'the popular player, in whom none foresees the poet of the human race.' The populace who crowded to look at Charles and Louise de Kerroualle coming to Hampton never knew or thought of Cromwell's Latin secretary, dictating in his study, old, blind, and poor. Well, it only shows us what fools men are, either to court the world or care for it ! Apropos of célèbres, Alma, you, vouée as you are to historic associa-

tions, should never be dull here, with all the souvenirs that are round Richmond and Twickenham."

"Ah!" said Alma, turning her bright beaming face on him, "how often I think of them all!—of the talk round that little deal table in the grotto, spiced with the same wit that gave its sting to the Dunciad and its sparkle to the Essay; of Swift, with his brilliant azure eyes, and his wonderful satire, and his exigent selfish man-like loves; of Mrs. Clive, with her humorous stories; and Harry Fielding, laughing as he wrote the scenes men still cite as master-pieces, and packing away his papers to eat his scrag of mutton as gleefully as if it were an entremét; and Walpole, with his mediæval tastes and modern fashions, sitting up a Gothic chapel and writing for a Paris suit, publishing 'Otranto,' and talking scandales in Boodle's—how often I think of them!"

"You need not tell me that," laughed De Vigne. "I have not forgotten all your romantic souvenirs at the mere view of the sites of Strawberry Hill and Pope's villa. With your historic passion, you live in the past. Well! it is safer and less deceptive, if not less visionary, than living in the future."

"Perhaps I do both; yet I have little to hope from the future."

"Why?" said De Vigne, kindly. "Who knows but what one of your old favorites, the fairies, may bring good gifts to their little queen? We will hope so, at least."

Alma shook her head. "I am afraid not. The only fairy that has any power now is Money, and the good gifts the gods give us now-a-days only go to those who have golden coffers to put them in. Yes, I do live in the past; my future I cannot trust. I very seldom look at it, save in wild delicious fancies, which, I fear, will never come true; but the past—I love to go back to it, with its quaint Vandyke portraits, and its rich Velasquez coloring, and its

chiar'oscuro of time, which gives it a dim golden haze that was probably never its own. I think the company of Commynes and Froissart, Saint-Simon, and Hervey, and Walpole, better, after all, than many of the circles of modern society. I like to go back into the past through the quaint word-painting of an old chronicle, or the deep rich hues of a Murillo or a Velasquez. I love those dim yet brilliant pictures of by-gone days that poetry and history weave together. They are all living to me—those grave and stately signori who condemned Faliero; those silent resolute Netherlanders who gathered in the marketplace to see Lamoral d'Egmont die with his Golden Fleece around his neck, the gift of his tiger-king; those gay and glittering crowds of haughty noblesse that filled the palaces of the Bourbons, and laughed at the malicious wit of Athenais de Montespan, with her 'dove's eye and serpent's tongue;' those dandies and beauties who dressed for Ranelagh and clapped the 'Beggars' Opera,' and followed the lead of Beaux Edgeworth and Nash, Fielding and Brummel, copying the tie of their cravats one hour, and letting them languish in prison the next; those wits and celebrities whose mots still sparkle through the dry pages of memoirs, and gleam through the yellow faded leaves of their letters,—they are all living to me, Sir Folko! as living as if I heard the rustle of their silks, and the ring of their jeux de mots, and the glitter of their stars and orders!"

He laughed. It amused him unspeakably to hear her talk. If she had chosen to go on for an hour, I don't believe he would ever have stopped her.

"I often think," Alma went on, "what pride and gratification it must be to any man—to you, for instance—to look back on a long line of noble ancestry. It must give you a glow of a warmer feeling than pride; it must bring you a heritage of honor that none can take away; it must

make you love to live so as never to disgrace them, nor stain the name they have handed down to you?"

Her unconscious words struck with a keen sting into De Vigne's heart. He loved his gentleman's name, honored as it had been in by-gone generations by the talent, courage, and gallantry of his father's fathers. He was proud of his ancestry, as all men must be who have anything in them of a love for what is noble and worthy. He, in his boyhood, had vowed "to live so as never to disgrace them;" yet he had been the first of his line that had given it to one who dishonored it; he had been the first who had placed it in hands that degraded it! Alma's innocent words struck the chord of that bitter regret which was ever upon him—the stain of his marriage upon that name which had never before been borne save by women noble of birth and pure in life. He answered her with an effort. Unfulfilled aspirations, unkept resolves, unavailing regrets, rose up in him at her words.

"It *ought*—it does not follow that it *must*. What should be, rarely is, petite. Still I think with you: it were odd if the man who inherited intellect cultivated, manners refined, and honor held high through many generations, had not something better born in him with his pur sang than the man whose fathers were blackguards, thieves—God knows what—whose hands were dirty, and brains untutored, and names unknown and unvalued. But just now men of rank and breeding are selected only as the stalking-horse on which to exhibit *in terrorem* all the vices of the Decalogue and the law courts. In all the romances of the day—pandering to public taste, and written very often by people not within the pale of good society, ignorant of its ways and envious of its distinctions—the hero is invariably self-educated—other education is thought, I suppose, *de luxe*; and you are carefully assured that he never either

could, or would, or wished to be, attractive and well-bred, those being sybaritisms, and quite anterior to the rough 'muscular Christianity' of which he is certain to be an apostle. To write a book of what will be called a 'healthy' and 'moral' tone—a book that will 'go down' in religious circles, and be 'asked for' at circulating libraries—you must now be careful to select some brawny-armed carpenter, or hard-working 'self-made man'—you must throw in, into counter-position to him, a man of rank, blackguardly as the details of Bow Street police-court—you must balance in exact ratio the morality and purity of your under-bred man with the rascality and impossible villainy of your well-born enfant terrible—you must incline your heroine to the satanic beauty of your Lothario, but make her see her error, and take refuge in the arms of your Hercules. Such a plot, with a few stale apothegms, a night class, where your hero teaches the Gospel, or some moral philosophies, with a retributive end to your supposititious 'gentleman,' and a good scene at the finish of your ungainly but immaculate pet, with one eye burnt out in the conflagration of his mill or his workshop, and an open Bible laid out on his knee, your novel will be healthy, and, what healthy writers count on most, remunerative. Doubtless there are very estimable coal-merchants, most irreproachable carpenters; I am sure there are, though they don't happen to be in my set, and come across my path. No doubt a man who rises like Robert Peel, or Edward Sugden, or Douglas Jerrold, is a noble example in our generation, as Baptiste Colbert was in his; we can wish for none better, we can cite none more encouraging to young men of talent superior to their fortunes, and energy struggling against adverse circumstances. But, because a man *has* risen from the ranks, it is very far from following that he must necessarily have risen by right means or worthy steps. Very often it

is quite the contrary; it is very generally by chicanery and fraud, by doing very dirty jobs, by kicking down each round of the ladder by which they have profited, by squeezing every farthing out of widows and orphans, by unseen swindling and robbery under the rose: because a man is a 'self-made man,' it does not follow that the tools he has used are those for which we should laud him."

"No," answered Alma; "it is a curious fancy of the present day, that the mud of the gutter must purify, and the blue blood of the stately escutcheons must stain; and it is as curious a paradox that the very authors who, in writing of some historic site, dwell with such ecstasies on the nobility and heroism of those who made it famous, try to sneer down, with a savage cut at aristocracy, the descendants of the men they eulogize. If great deeds give such an aroma to woods and hills, mortar and stone, surely they may give some to the inheritors of their blood and their name. It is singular, as you say, to see the universal type adopted in all novels of the present day. *Your* class is never represented, or at least never fairly."

De Vigne laughed:

"No; the romancists only take our class to vilify it, and lead it out as a *bête noire* or a scarecrow. The soldier or the man of rank is scarcely ever represented as he *is* in any novel of the day; yet we are a large class—perhaps the best educated in the land—certainly one that has the most influence in many things; but military men are invariably made such under-bred fools as would be inadmissible in the society to which they belong, and of a 'gentleman'—*i.e.* a man of honor, birth, and high breeding, such as, though they may not be demigods or saints, one meets many, thank God! both in literary and patrician circles—the young men and maidens who rush into print would seem to have not the faintest notion, since if their char-

acters be meant to be of tolerable birth and manners, they load them with the vulgar tricks they see now and then detailed in the newspaper reports of some drunken ensign with his school-boy mischief still about him. There is a strange spite—for it really merits no higher term—against the aristocracy—not a just and sensible exposition, that brain, wherever it be found, whether under Chatham's coronet, or Burns's peasant bonnet, is equally worthy, and Watt studying steam by his aunt's cottage tea-kettle is as great in his way as Wellington planning the lines of Torres Vedras in his—but a smarting, envious, venomous spite, which decrees that good names in his past must make a man utterly unable to make great names for himself. We see the contrary around us every day; we have great statesmen, soldiers, men of letters, who give the lie to it. It is to men of birth and cultivation that the country is glad to come for its prime ministers and its cabinet counselors; yet the opticism holds its reign; and if a peer's son, once in a way, plays one of those harum-scarum, vulgar, practical jokes such as are not unknown, though unrecorded, among the young Browns, and Joneses, and Robinsons of the immaculate 'middle class,' pounce come all the little stinging flies and seize upon the offense, and hold it up to the eyes of the nation with angry snarl and coarse anathema against his Order, with as much wisdom and justice in their sweeping invective as those would show who called a merchant a bankrupt because his boy owed five shillings to a school-fellow he could not pay until next half. I take it, if one looked thoroughly into it, that the dissipations of the upper classes, on which these gentry, who find it 'the thing' to prate of 'pure lives' and 'spotless morals,' hold forth so severely of late, be, after all, worse in their way and in their fruits than the giant frauds, the *sub rosa* robberies, the mercantile lies, the banking swindles, the professional

hypocrisies, the dishonest jesuitisms, perpetrated in the middle classes under the name of—Business. But I shall talk myself hoarse, and you deaf, Alma. One o'clock. We have absolutely been walking two hours. We must turn back, or I shall have you knocked up. You are not used to our cold March mornings."

"But I enjoy it so intensely," interrupted Alma, lifting her radiant face to his. "Won't you come in and have some luncheon? You dined often enough at Weive Hurst," she asked, as he held out his hand to her at the gate.

Luncheon is not disagreeable after three hours' walking. He went and took some of Mrs. Lee's admirably done cutlets, just served for Alma's little dinner, and he stayed till the afternoon sun was getting red in the west. Alma walked with him down the garden, and as he looked back and waved her an adieu, De Vigne could not help but confess that she made a pretty tableau leaning over the white gate with little Sylvo in her arms.

He smiled as he walked along, cutting the brown grass with his cane. "She is a clever little thing," he thought to himself; "it is wonderfully amusing to talk to her. Poor child! it is a dull life for her there. Well! she is out of harm's way; in the world she would soon come to grief."

De Vigne was destined to remember, too late, that "*L'Amitié est l'Amour sans ailes*," and that the pinions may be sprouted and spread ere we even know of their growth.

PART THE ELEVENTH.

I.

HOW DE VIGNE AMUSES HIMSELF WITH FENCING, AND
NEVER DREAMS THE BUTTONS CAN FLY OFF.

DE VIGNE never did anything by halves, to use a sufficiently expressive, if not over-elegant, colloquialism. He hated and mistrusted women, not individually, as he ought to have done, but sweepingly, en masse. At the same time, there was in him, naturally, too much chivalry and generosity not to make him pity "Little Tressillian," and show her kindness to the best of his power. In the first place, the girl was all alone, and had no money—two facts which appealed to his delicacy and warmer feeling; in the second, he had known her as a little girl, still held her as such, indeed, and never thought of classing her among his detested "beau sexe;" in the third, the letter of Boughton Tressillian had in a way recommended her to his care, and, though De Vigne would have been the first to laugh at another man who, at thirty-five, had taken up a girl of eighteen as a protégée, and made sure no harm could come of it, he really looked on Alma as a child, though a very attractive and interesting child it is true, and would have stared at you if you had made his kindness to her the subject of one of those jests customary on the acquaintance of a man about town and an unprotected girl—like himself and "Little Tressillian." He *was* kind to her, for there was a deep spring of generosity and (where he liked people) of lavish kindness under the cynicism and chill *reserve* now gathered round him. As he had promised; he

picked out some of the choicest books of his library, his own favorites—not such as young ladies read generally, but such as it might be better if they did—and sent them to her, with the reviews and periodicals of the month. He sent her, too, one of his parrots, for her to teach, he said, she being such an admirable adept in the locutory art, and some flowers, to put her in mind of Weive Hurst.

“Her room looked so pitifully dull, poor child!” said he, one morning, when I was lunching with him. “Those flowers will brighten it up a little, and she’ll care for them more than I. Raymond, did you send Robert down with those things to Richmond?”

“Yes, Major.”

I chanced to look at the man as he spoke; he was the new valet, whom De Vigne thought such an acquisition. He was a smooth, fair-faced fellow, really gentlemanlike to look at, not, *ça va sans dire*, the “gentlemanism” of high breeding, but the gentlemanlyism of many an oily parson or sleek parvenu. There was a slight twinkle in his light eyes, and a quick, fox-like glance as he answered his master, which looked as if he at least attached some amusement to the Major’s acquaintance with the pretty little artiste at St. Crucis-on-the-Hill.

De Vigne never remembered the presence of servants; he thought they had no more eyes or ears than the chairs or tables around him. They served him as the plates or the glasses did, and they were no more than those to him; else, wise man as he was, he ought to have recollected that, if he wished to draw no notice upon Alma, he should not have sent his servants to her with books and flowers. More mischief, reports, and embrouillements have come from the prying eyes, coarse tongues, and second-hand slanders of those “necessary evils” than we ever dream of, for the buzz of the servants’ hall is often as poisonous as the subdued

murmur of the scandal-retailing boudoir above stairs. How it came about, I don't know, but Alma, some way or other, was not long kept *in pello*. Some three weeks after that, Sabretasche, Curly, Tom Severn, Vane Castleton, and one or two other men were at De Vigne's house. We had been playing Loo, his favorite game, and were now supping, between three and four, off all the delicacies and first-class wines his chef and cellar could offer us, chatting of two-year-olds and Derby books, of bons mots and beauties, of how Mademoiselle Fifiue had fleeced Little Pulteney, and Bob Green's roan mare won a handicap for 200 sovs.—the talk that is chatted over a late supper-table and choice champagne cup, in real life; though, no doubt, real life is shockingly frivolous, and all wrong altogether, and we *ought*—though you know we never *do*—out of “healthy novels” of “muscular Christianity” (by the way, what may that mean ?) to have been puzzling out our several missions, discussing how to Christianize India, analyzing the Origin of Species, or blackening everybody else's character and whitening our own, which is, I believe, the received recipe for “regenerating” society.

It was curious to see the difference between men's outer and inner lives. There was Sabretasche lying back in the very easiest chair in the room, witty, charming, urbane, with not a trace on his calm, delicate features of the care within him that he had bade Violet Molyneux not tempt him to unveil; there was Tom Severn, of the Queen's Bays, with twenty “*in re's*” hanging over his head, and a hundred “little bills” on his mind, going to the dogs by express train, who had been playing away as if he had had Barclay's to back him; there was Wyndham, with as dark and melancholy a past as ever pursued a man, a past of which I know he repented, not in ostentatious sackcloth and ashes, but bitterly and unfeignedly in silence and hu-

military, tossing down Moët's with a gay laugh and a ready jest, as agreeable in the card-room as he was eloquent in the Lower House; there was Charlie Fitzhardinge, who, ten years ago, had accidentally killed his youngest brother, a Benjamin tenderly and deeply loved by him, and had never ceased to be haunted by that fair distorted face, laughing and chatting as if he had never had a care on his shoulders; there was Vane Castleton, the worst, as I have told you, of all Tiara's sons, a fellow without heart, honor, or conscience, fatal to women and disliked by men—with his low voice, his fair, smooth brow, his engaging address, nobody would have thought he would have hurt a fly, yet we called him butcher, because, in his petty malignity, he had hamstrung a luckless mare of his for not winning a Sweepstakes he had intended her, and had shot dead the young brother of a girl, the daughter of a clergyman, (whom he had eloped with, and left three weeks after without a shilling to help herself,) for trying, poor boy! to revenge the faithless cruelty to his sister; there was De Vigne—yet, no, De Vigne's face was type true enough of his character—a character reserved, by nature very frank and haughty, generous as the winds, but impetuous, passionate, and proud; in the sleeping fire of his eyes and the iron command of his brow, with the strong, straight arch of its eyebrows, was the visible stamp of an unquiet fate.

"Halloa, De Vigne," began Tom Severn, at supper, "a pretty story this is about you, you sly dog! So this painter of yours we were all called in to admire a little time ago is a little concealed Venus, eh?"

De Vigne looked up from helping me to some mayonnaise.

"Explain yourself, Tom; I don't understand you."

"*Won't* understand, you mean. You know you've a little beauty locked up all to yourself in a farm-house at Rich-

mond, and never have told it to your bosom friends. Shockingly shabby of you, De Vigne, to show us that water-color and let us believe it was done by a young fellow in Poland Street. However, I suppose you don't want any rivals poaching on your manor, and the girl is à ravir, we're told, so we must forgive you, eh?"

De Vigne looked supremely disdainful and a little annoyed.

"Pray, my dear Severn, may I ask where you picked up this cock-and-bull story?"

"Oh yes. Winters, and Egerton, and Steele were making chaff about it in the Army and Navy this morning, saying Hercules had found his Omphale, and they were glad of it, for Dejanira was a devil!"

The blood flushed over De Vigne's white forehead as Severn, in the thoughtlessness of his heart, spoke what *he* meant as good nature; even yet he could not hear unmoved the slightest allusion to the Trefusis, the one disgrace upon his life, the one stain upon his name.

"How *they* heard it I can't tell you," said Severn; "you must ask 'em. Somebody saw the girl looking after you at the gate, I believe. She's a deuced pretty little thing, ain't she?—trust you for that, though—with golden hair, I think. I like golden hair myself, it's so out of the common, and makes a woman look like a walking sunbeam. But what do you call it a cock-and-bull story for? It's too likely a one for you to deny it with any chance of our believing you, and Heaven knows why you should try. You may hate women now, but everybody knows you never forswore them. We are all shepherds here, as Robin Hood says."

De Vigne was annoyed: in the first place, that this report, which could but be detrimental to her, should, in *so brief a time*, already have circulated about himself and

poor little Alma; in the second, any interference with him or his pursuits or plans always irritated him exceedingly; in the third, he knew that if he ever disabused their minds of his having any connection with Alma, to know that a pretty little thing was living alone and unprotected was for these fellows to ferret her out immediately, to which her métier of professional artiste would give them the means at once. He was exceedingly annoyed, but he was too wise a man not to know that manifestation of his annoyance would be the surest way to confirm the gossip that had got about concerning them, which for himself, of course, didn't matter two straws.

He laughed slightly. "We are, it is true, Tom; nevertheless, there is a fawn here and there that it is the duty of all of us to spare; don't you know that? I assure you—and I have no need to ask any of you to believe my word—that the gossip you have heard is pure gossip, but gossip which annoys me, for this reason, that the lady who is the innocent subject of it is the granddaughter of a very old friend of mine, Tressillian, of Wiltshire, whom I met accidentally a few weeks ago. Her picture hangs in my room here, but merely because she wished to have Sabretasche's judgment upon it, of whom I had spoken to her as a dilettante and first-rate artist. Beyond, I have no interest in her, nor she in me, and for the sake of my dead friend, any insult to her name I shall certainly consider as though one to my own, for I respect Miss Tressillian as fully as if she were now in the rank and affluence her childhood was passed in, and I shall listen to measurable gossip about her as little as I should listen to it about any sister of mine, if I had one."

He spoke quietly and carelessly, but his words had weight. De Vigne had never been known to condescend to a lie, not even to a subterfuge or a prevarication, and

there was such a haughty *noli me tangere* air about him, that nobody thought of meddling with his concerns.

"All right, old fellow," said good-natured Tom Severn. "I didn't know, you see; fellows will talk."

"Of course they will," said De Vigne, eating his marinade leisurely; "and in nine times out of ten they would have been right. I never set up to be a pharisee, God knows. I'm a great deal too naughty a boy for that. However, I have no temptation now, for love affairs are no longer to my taste—I leave them to Corydons like Curly. As poetic individuals say, I have but one love, my sword, and if I can't have her, I am so constant I care for no other."

"But, hang it! De Vigne," said Vane Castleton, "Tom's description of this little Trevelyan, Trevanion—what is it?—is so delightful, if you don't care for her yourself, you might let your friends. Introduce us all, do."

"Thank you, Castleton," said De Vigne, dryly. "Though you are a Duke's son, I must say I don't think you a very desirable addition to a lady's acquaintance."

He cordially detested Castleton, than whom a vainer or more intensely selfish fellow never curled his whiskers and befooled women silly enough to be caught by his specious manners and purring voice, and he had only invited him because he had been arm-in-arm with Severn when De Vigne asked Tom that morning in Regent Street.

Lord Vane pushed his fine fair curls off his forehead—an habitual trick of his; his brow was very low, and his blond hair, of which he took immense care, was everlastingly falling across his eyes. "Jealous, after all! A trifle of the dog in the manger, eh? with all your philosophy and a—a—what do you call it, chivalry?" he said, with a supercilious smile.

I knew De Vigne was growing impatient; his eyes

brightened, his mouth grew set, and he pulled his left wristband over his wrist with a jerk. I think that left arm felt an intense longing in its muscles and sinews to "straighten from the shoulder;" with him, as with David, it was a great difficulty to keep the fire from "kindling." But he spoke quietly, very quietly for him; more so than he would have done if no other name than his own had been implicated in it; for he knew the world too well not to know, also, that to make a woman the subject of a dispute or a brawl is to do her the worst service you can.

"I am not a boy to interpret insult where no insult is dreamt of, so I shall not take your speech as it might be taken, Castleton," he said, gravely, with a scornful, haughty smile upon his lips. "*My friends* accept my word and understand my meaning; what *you* may think of me or not is really of so little consequence that I do not care to inquire your opinion."

Castleton's eyes scintillated with that cold unpleasant glare with which light-gray eyes sometimes kindle when angry. If he had been an Eton or Rugby boy, one would have called him "sulky;" for a man of rank and fashion the word would have been too small. A scene might have ensued, but Sabretasche—most inimitable tactician—broke the silence with his soft low voice:

"De Vigne, do you know that Harvey Goodwin's steel grays are going for an old song in the Yard? I fancy I shall buy them. Don't you think they would go well with the pair I bought the other day for my drag?"

So the conversation was turned, and little Alma Tresillian's name was dropped. Curly, however, half out of mechanceté, half because he never heard of a pretty woman without making a point of seeing her, never let De Vigne alone till he had promised to introduce him to her.

"Do, old fellow," urged Curly, "because you know I remember her at Weive Hurst, and she had such deuced lovely eyes then. Do! I promise you to treat her as if she were the richest heiress in the kingdom, and hedged round with a perfect abatis of chaperones. I can't say more!"

So De Vigne took him down, being quite sure that if he did not show him the way Curly would find it for himself, and knowing, too, that Curly, though he was a dandy, a "little wild," as good-natured ladies say, indolent, spoilt, and devil-may-care, was a true gentleman; and when a man is that, you may trust him, where his honor is touched or his generosity concerned, to break through his outer shell of fashion, ennui, and dissipation, and "come out strong" in his original inborn nature.

So De Vigne, as I say, took him down one morning, when we had nothing to do, to the little farm-house of St. Crucis. It was a queer idea, as conventionalities go, for a young girl to receive the visits of men like ourselves without any chaperone to protect her and play propriety; but the little lady was one out of a thousand; she could do things that no other woman could, and she welcomed us with such a mixture of frank and childlike simplicity, and the self-possession, ready wit, and perfect ease of a woman ten years her senior, and accustomed to society, that it was very pretty to see her. And we should have known but a very trifle of life and womanhood if we had not felt how utterly distant from boldness or forwardness of any kind was our Little Tressillian's charming vivacity and ingenuous candor—a vivacity that can only come from an intelligent mind, a candor that can only spring from a heart that thinks no ill because it means none. "To the pure all things are pure." True words! Many a spotless rain-drop gleams unsoiled on a filthy and betrotten trot-

toir; many a worm grovels in native mud beneath an unspotted and virgin covering of fairest snow.

It was really pretty to see Alma entertain her callers—three bien-aimés of fashionable sets, moreover, and fastidious to the last degree. She was perfectly natural, because she never thought about herself. She was delighted to see De Vigne, and happy to see us, as he had brought us—not quite as flattering a reason for our welcome as Curly and I were accustomed to receive; and in her dainty picturesque dress, (she still retained the taste for pretty toilettes, given her by Boughton Tressillian in her childhood,) sitting in her little low chair, Alma chatted with us all as easily and fluently as, but with much more simplicity and talent than, any Belgravian belle.

"Have you walked every day, Alma, as I told you?" said De Vigne.

"Not every day," said Alma, penitentially. "I will when the summer comes; but the eternal spring upon my canvas is much dearer and more tempting to me than your chill and changeable English spring."

"You are very naughty, then," said De Vigne; "you will be sorry ten years hence for having wasted your health. What is your aim in working and working eternally like this?"

"To make money to buy my shoes, and my gloves, and my dresses. I have nobody to buy them for me, you know; that is aim practical enough to please you, is it not?"

"But that is not your only one, I fancy?" smiled Curly. "Miss Tressillian scarcely looks like the expounder of prosaic doctrine."

"No; not my only one," answered Alma, quickly, her dark-blue eyes lighting up under their silky and upcurled lashes. "They say there is no love more tender than the love of an artist for his work, whether he is author, painter,

or musician; and I believe it. For the fruit of your talent you bear a love that no one, save those who feel it, can ever attempt to understand. You long to strengthen your wings, to exert your strength, to cultivate your powers, till you can make them such as must command applause; and when I see a master-piece, of whatever genre, I worship with my whole heart the divinity of genius, and feel as if I should never rest till I, too, had laid some worthy offering upon the altar of art."

Ideal and enthusiastic as the words may seem, coldly considered, as little Alma spoke them, with her eloquent voice and gesticulation, and her whole face beaming with the earnestness of her own belief in what she said, we three men, quickest of all mortals to sneer at "sentiment," felt no inclination to ridicule here, but rather a sad regret for the cold winds that we knew would so soon break and scatter the warm petals of this bright, joyous, Southern flower, and gave a wistful backward glance to the time when we, too, had like thoughts—we, too, like fervor.

De Vigne felt it more, I believe, than either of us, but, as his wont was, he turned it with a laugh:

"Curly, you need not have started that young lady. In that fertile brain I ought to have warned you there is a powder-magazine of enthusiasm ready to explode at the mere hint of a firebrand, which one ought not to approach within a mile at the least. It will blow itself up some day in its own excessive energy, and get quenched in the world's cold water!"

"Heaven forefend!" cried Curly. "The enthusiasm, which you so irreverently compare to gunpowder, is too rare and too precious not to be taken all the care of that one can. If the ladies of the world had a little of such fire, we, their sons, or lovers, or brothers, might be a trifle less useless, vapid, and wearied."

"Quenched in the world's cold water!" cried Alma, who had been pondering on De Vigne's speech, and had never heard poor Curly's. "It never shall be, Sir Folko. The fire of true enthusiasm is like the fires of Baku, which no water can ever attempt to quench, and which burn steadily on from night to day, and year to year, because their well-spring is eternal."

"Or because the gases are poisonous, and nobody cares to approach them?" asked De Vigne, mischievously.

I noticed that Alma was the first who had brought back in any degree the love of merriment and repartee natural to him in his youth; the first with whom, since his fatal marriage-day, he had ever cordially *laughed*. She called him Sir Folko, because she persisted in the resemblance between him and her favorite knight which she had discovered in her childhood, and because, as she told him, "Major De Vigne" was so ceremonious. His manner with her, like that of an elder brother to a pretty spoilt child, had established a curiously familiar friendship between them, strangely different from the usual intercourse of men and young girls; for De Vigne received from her the compliments and frankly-expressed admiration that come ordinarily from the man to the woman. Somehow or other it seemed perfectly natural between *them*, and, après tout, Eve's

My author and disposer!—what thou wilt,
Unargued I obey. God is thy law,
Thou mine——

is strangely touching, sweet, and natural—strangely like, surely, the love that nature *meant* women to bear to men, and strangely *unlike* the "penchant" of the present day, when we kneel at the lady's feet to sue for that condescending assurance of an "interest," unacknowledged and unseen till our "intentions" are fully known, and even then meas-

ured out but gingerly and meagerly, as is maidenly and proper!

Alma shook her head (on which the much-praised "golden hair" of Tom Severn waved and clustered in shining undulating bandeaux) impatiently at De Vigne:

"Who can beat you at repartee? If the gas is poisoned, monsieur, you have some of it. You have a good deal of enthusiasm, only it has had a marble stone rolled over it, somehow or other, and will not acknowledge it is still alive and awake under it."

"The deuce!—how quick-sighted this little thing is!" thought De Vigne, as he answered:

"I enthusiastic! Good Heavens! what an idea! I have done with all that long ago, thank God. I am the most practical and commonplace man——"

"You commonplace!" cried Alma, with horror unspeakable, and bursting indignation. "Well, if you are commonplace, so am I, and that is a thing I never *did* think!"

"No, but perhaps you have rather more vanity than I?" said De Vigne, looking at her with an amused smile. Alma, for once, had no answer, she was so occupied in laughing at her own defeat.

Curly was enchanted with her; he went into tenfold more raptures about her than the beauties of the Drawing-room, with their perfect tournures and sweeping trains, had ever extorted from him; she was "just his style;" a thing, however, that Curly was perpetually avowing of every different style of blonde and brunette, tall or small, statuesque or kittenish, as they chanced to chase one another in and out of his capacious heart.

"She is a little darling!" he swore, earnestly, as we drove homeward, "and certainly the very prettiest woman I have ever seen."

"Rather overdone that, Curly," said De Vigne, dryly,

"considering all the regular beauties you have fallen down before and worshiped, and that poor little Alma is no regular beauty at all."

"No, she's much better," said Curly, decidedly. "Where's your regular beauty that's worth that little dear's grace, and vivacity, and lovely coloring?"

De Vigne put up his eyebrows as if he would not give much for the praise of such a universal admirer as Curly was of all degrees and orders of the beau sexe.

II.

LE CHAT QUI DORMAIT.

"WHO is that Little Tressillian they were talking of at De Vigne's the other night?" Sabretasche asked me one morning, in the window at White's—his club, par excellence, where he was referee and criterion on all things of art, fashion, and society, and where his word could crush a belle, sell a picture, and condemn a coterie.

He shrugged his shoulders as I told him, and stroked his moustaches:

"Very little good will come of *that*; at least for her; for him there will be an amusement for a time, then a certain regret—remorse, perhaps, as he is very generous-hearted—and then a separation, and—oblivion."

"Do you think so? I fancy De Vigne paid too heavy a price for passion to have any fancy to let its reins loose again."

"Mon cher, mon cher!" cried Sabretasche, impatiently, "if Phaeton had not been killed by that thunderbolt, do you suppose that the bouleversement and the conflagration

would have deterred him from driving his father's chariot as often as Sol would have let him had it?"

"Possibly not; but I mean that De Vigne is thoroughly steeled against all female humanity. The sex of the Tressilis cannot possibly, he thinks, have any good in it; and I believe he only takes what notice he does of Alma Tressillian from friendship for her old grandfather, and pity for her desolate position."

"Friendship—pity? For Heaven's sake, Arthur, do not you, a man of the world, talk such nonsense. To what, pray, do friendship and pity invariably bring men and women? De Vigne and his protégée are walking upon mines."

"Which will explode beneath them?"

"Sans doute. We are, unhappily, mortal, *mon ami*! I will go down and see this Alma Tressillian some day when I have nothing to do. Let me see; she is painting that little picture for me, of course, that I ordered of him from his unknown artist. He must take me down; I shall soon see how the land lies between them."

Accordingly, Sabretasche one day, when De Vigne and he were driving down to a dinner at the Castle, took out his watch, and found they would be there twenty minutes too early, from De Vigne's clocks having been too fast.

"We shall be there half an hour too soon, my dear fellow. Turn aside, and take me to see this little friend of yours with the pretty name and the pretty pictures. If you refuse, I shall think Vane Castleton is right, and that you are like the famed dog in the manger. I have a right to see the artist that is executing my own order."

De Vigne nodded, and turned the horses' heads toward St. Crucis, not with an over good grace, though, for he knew Sabretasche's reputation was that he was as cruel as he was winning to the fair sex; and the Colonel, with his

fascination and his *bonnes fortunes*, was not exactly the man that, whether dog in the manger or not, De Vigne thought a very safe friend for his "Little Tressillian." But he did not care enough about it to make an excuse, if he had had one, and there was no possibility of resisting Sabretasche when he had set his mind upon anything. Very quietly, very gently, but very securely, he kept his hold upon it till he had it yielded up to him. I believe it was that quality, more than even his beauty and his attractions, which gave him his *Juanesque* reputation and success.

So De Vigne had to introduce the Colonel to little Alma, who received them with her usual ease and grace, so singularly free alike from *gêne* or boldness, awkwardness or freedom. Sabretasche dropped into an easy-chair beside her, with his eye-glass up, and began to talk to her. He was a great adept in the art of "bringing out." He had a way of hovering over a woman, and fixing his beautiful eyes on her, and talking softly and pleasantly, so that the subject under his skillful mesmerism developed talent that might otherwise never have gleamed out; and with Alma, who could talk with any and everybody on all subjects under the sun, from metaphysics and ethics to her kitten's collar, and who would discuss philosophies with you as readily as she would chatter nonsense to her parrot, it is needless to say Sabretasche had little difficulty.

De Vigne, Sabretasche's only rival at club and mess-rooms in wit, and repartee, and varied, original conversation, let the Colonel have all the talk to himself, half irritated—he scarcely knew why—at the sight of his immovable and inquiring eye-glass, and the sound of his low, *trainante*, musical voice. Now and then, amidst his conversation, the Colonel shot a glance at him, and went on with his criticisms on art, sacred, legendary, and historic ;

on painting in the medieval and the modern styles, with such a deep knowledge and refined appreciation of his subject as few presidents of the R. A. have ever shown in their lectures.

At last De Vigne rose, impatient past endurance, though he could hardly have told you why.

"It is half-past six, Sabretasche; the turbot and turtle will be cold."

The Colonel smiled:

"Thank you, my dear fellow; there are a few things in life more attractive than turtle or turbot. The men will wait; they would be the last to hurry us if they knew our provocation to delay."

De Vigne could have found it in his heart to have kicked the Colonel for that speech, and the soft sweet glance accompanying it. "He will spoil that little thing," he thought, angrily. "No woman's head is strong enough to stand his and Curly's flattery."

"I like your little lady, De Vigne," said Sabretasche, as they drove away. "She is really very charming, good style, and strikingly clever."

"She is not *mine*," said De Vigne, with a haughty stare of surprise.

"Well! she will be, I dare say."

"Indeed no. I did not suppose your notions of my honor, or rather dishonor, were like Vane Castleton's."

"Nor are they, cher ami," said the Colonel, with that grave gentleness which occasionally replaced his worldly wit and gay ordinary tone. "But like him I know the world; and I know, as you would, too, if you thought a moment, that a man of your age cannot have that sort of friendly intercourse with a girl of hers without its surely ripening into something infinitely warmer and more dangerous. You would be the first to sneer at an attempt at

platonic in another; you are the last man in the world to dream of such follies yourself. Tied as you are by the cruelty and absurdity of Church and Law, you cannot frequent the society of a girl as fascinating as your little friend yonder without danger for her; and for you, with your generous nature, probably regret and remorse, or, at the least, satiety and regret. With nine men out of ten the result would be love and a liaison lightly formed and as lightly broken; but you have an uncommon nature, and a young girl like Little Tressillian your own warmth of heart would never let you desert and leave unprotected. I hate advising; I never do it to anybody. My life has left me little title to counsel men against sins and follies which I daily commit myself, nor do I count as sins many things the world condemns as such. Only here I see so plainly what will come of it, that I do not like you to rush into it blindfold and repent of it afterward. Because you have had fifty such loves which cost you nothing, that is no reason that the fifty-first may not cost you some pain, some very great pain, in its formation or its severance——”

“You mean very kindly, Sabretasche, but there is no question of ‘love’ here,” interrupted De Vigne, with his impatient hauteur. “In the first place, you, so well read in woman’s character, might know she is far too frank and familiar with me for any fear of the kind in another. I have paid too much for passion ever to risk it again. I am not a boy to fall into a thing whether I like it or not, and I hope I know too well what is due from honor and generosity to win the love of a young and unprotected girl like Alma while I am by my own folly fettered and cursed by marriage ties. Sins enough I have upon my soul, God knows, but there is no danger of my erring here. I have no temptation; but if I had I should resist it; to take advantage of her innocence and ignorance of my history

would be a blackguard's act, to which no madness, even if I felt it, would ever make me condescend to stoop!"

De Vigne spoke with all the sternness and impatience natural to him when roused, spoke in overstrong terms, as men do of a fault they are sure they shall never commit themselves. Sabretasche listened, an unusual angry shadow gathering in his large soft eyes, and a bitter sneer on his pale delicate features, as he leaned back and folded his arms to silence and *dolce*.

"Most immaculate pharisee! Remember a divine injunction, 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

De Vigne cut his horses impatiently with the whip.

"I am no pharisee, but I am, with all my faults and vices, a man of honor still."

Sabretasche answered nothing, but annoyance was still in his eyes, and a sneer still on his lips. In a few minutes they had reached the Castle, and over their Rhenish and entremets De Vigne and Sabretasche laughed and talked as though they had quite forgotten their approach to a quarrel. They were too wise men, and too attached to one another, to split upon straws. Sabretasche was really a very sweet temper. He was wont to say anger was such a trouble and exertion that no man who knew how to enjoy life would allow himself to feel it. De Vigne was a hot and fiery temper, but if he was wrong he would own it with frank grace; and if he had been in a fury and passion with you, he never by any chance bore you malice, and, as his poor mother used to say, the sun shone all the sweeter for the momentary tempest.

De Vigne had one fault, which I must have described his character very badly to you if you have not already seen, namely, that if advised not to do a thing, that thing would he go and do straightway; moreover, being a man of *strong* will and resolve, very fastidious in his own honor,

and very reliant on his own strength, he was too apt, as in his fatal marriage, to go headlong, perfectly safe in his own power to guide himself, to judge for himself, and to draw back when it was needful. Therefore, he paid no attention whatever to Sabretasche's counsels, but, as it chanced, went down to see Alma rather more often than he had done before; for she, when talking once of her pictures, had said how much she wished she could exhibit at the Water-Color Society, which De Vigne, knowing something of the president, and of the society in general, had been able to manage for her, greatly to her own delight, for Alma had all the natural ambition of true talent to make itself known and admired. De Vigne, too, was pleased to be the means of giving her pleasure, for he was by nature formed to do kindnesses where he liked people, and to enjoy seeing his kindness bring fruit of joy for others; and little Alma was now the only one to whom he softened, and hers the only gratitude expressed to him in which he believed.

"What should I do without you?" said Alma, fervently, to him one day, when he went there to tell her her picture was accepted. "Oh! you are so kind to me, Sir Folko!"

"I? Not at all, petite," laughed he. "I have nothing benevolent in my composition, I assure you."

"Benevolent! No," laughed Alma, indignantly, "that is a horrid word; that means a man who is as kind to his next-door neighbor as to the person he loves best in the world. Benevolent means a Jenkinson with white hair and unctuous words—a man who goes about for other people's destitute orphans or ragged children, and quite forgets to be sweet-tempered to his wife or generous to his own sons. Benevolent is as bad for a man's character as a shabby hat for his appearance. No, Sir Folko, you are much better than benevolent; you are generous, and

true, and noble-hearted, and do real kindnesses unseen, not ostentatious ones that men may praise you."

"That is no merit; I dislike praise, and hate to be thanked. But, my dear child, I wish you would not exalt me to such a pinnacle. What will you say when I tumble down one day, and you see nothing of me but worthless shivers?"

"Reverence you still," said Alma, softly. "A fragment of the Parthenon is worth a whole spotless and unbroken modern building. If my ideal were to fall, I should treasure the dust. The dead prince's heart was valued more than a thousand living ordinary ones of commonplace and useless Lowlanders."

"By the Douglas, perhaps; scarcely by the poor Lowlanders themselves," said De Vigne, half smiling. "But, seriously, I wish you would not get into the habit of rating me so high, Alma. I don't in the least come up to it. You do not guess—how should you?—you cannot even in fancy, picture the life that I, and men like me, lead; you cannot imagine the wild follies with which we drown our past, the reckless pleasures with which we pass our present, our temptations, our weaknesses, our errors; how should you, child as you are, living out of the world in a solitude peopled only with the bright fancies of your own pure imagination, that never incarnates the hideous fauns and beckoning bacchanals which haunt and fever ours?"

"But I can," said Alma, earnestly, looking up to him with her dark-blue eyes, in which even he, skeptic as he was in women, could see no guile and no concealment. "I do not go into the world, it is true, but still I know the world to a certain extent; it is not possible to read, as I have done, the broader and freer range of thinkers, which you tell me are *défendus* to girls of my age, without *learning* more of the thoughts, temptations, and impulses

of men than a young lady can learn by a few waltzes in a ball-room, or the vapid talk of ordinary society. Montaigne, Rochefoucauld, Rabelais, Goethe, Emerson, Bellingbroke, the translated classics, do you not think they teach me the world, or, at least, of what makes the world, Human Nature, better than the few hours at a dinner-table, or the gossip of morning calls, which you tell me is all girls like me, in good society, are allowed to see of life? You know, Sir Folko, it always seems to me that women, fenced in as they are in educated circles by boundaries which they cannot overstep, except to their own hinderance, screened from all temptations, deprived of all opportunity to wander, if they wished, out of the beaten track, should be all the gentler to your sex, whose whole life is one long temptation, and to whose lips is almost forced that Circean 'cup of life' whose flowers round its brim hide the poisons at its dregs. Women have, if they acknowledge them, passions, ambitions, impatience at their own monotonous rôle, longings for the living life denied to them; but everything tends to crush these down in them, has thus tended through so many generations, that now it has come to be an accepted thing that they must be calm, fair, pulseless, passionless statues, and when here and there a woman dares to acknowledge that her heart beats, and that nature is not wholly dead within her, the world stares at her, and rails at her, for there is no *bête noire* so terrible to the world as Truth! No, Sir Folko, though I am a girl—a child, as you say, in knowledge and experience, compared with you—I can fancy your temptations, I can picture your errors and your follies, I can understand how you drink your absinthe one hour because you liked its flavor, and drink more the next hour to make you forget your weakness in having yielded to it at all. That my own solitude and imagination are only peopled with shapes bright and fair, I must thank Heaven

and not myself. If I had been born in squalor and nursed in vice, what would circumstance and surroundings have made me? Oh, I think, instead of the pharisee's presumptuous 'I thank God that I am holier than he,' we, with human nature strong within us, and error ready at any moment to burst out, and passion beating so warmly in us as it does in the hearts of even the coldest and most prudent, our thanksgiving should be, 'I thank God that I have so little opportunity to do evil!' and we should forgive, as we wish to be forgiven ourselves, those whose temptations, either from their own nature, or from the outer world, have been so much greater than our own."

Her voice was wonderfully musical, with a strange *timbre* of pathos in it; her gesticulation had all the grace and fervor of her Southern Europe origin; her eyes and lips—indeed, her whole face—were singularly expressive of the thoughts that lay in her fertile and fervid mind, and spoke themselves in natural and untutored eloquence. Her words sent a strange thrill to De Vigne's heart; they were the first gentle, the first sympathizing, and the first tolerant words he had heard from a woman's lips since his mother had died. He had known but two classes of women: those who shared his errors and pandered to his pleasures, whose life disgusted, while their beauty lured him; and those who, piquing themselves on a superiority of virtue, perhaps not seldom unjustly denounced the shortcomings of others, giving the coup de Jarnac to those already gone down under society's kicks and cuffs, whose illiberality equally disgusted him in another way, and whose sermons only roused him to more wayward rebellion against the social laws which they expounded. It touched him singularly to hear words at once so true, so liberal, and so humble, from one on whose young life he knew that no stain had rested; to meet with so much comprehension and so much

sympathy from a heart, compared with his own, as pure and spotless from all error as the snow-white roses in her windows, on which the morning dewdrops rested without soil. Wide as was the difference between them, in the liberality of thought there was unison of mind; in the passion and warmth of heart, now checked in the man, still sleeping in the girl, there was similarity of character, and at her words something of De Vigne's old nature began to wake into new existence, as, after a long and weary sleep, the eyelids tremble before the soul arouses to the heat and action of the day.

As he looked down in those dangerous eyes of hers, a memory of the woman whom Church and Law in their cruel folly called his wife passed over him—he could scarcely tell why or how—with a cold chill, like the air of a pestilent charnel-house.

“Alma, if women were like you, men might be better than they are. Child, I wish you would not talk as you do. You wake up thoughts and memories that had far better sleep.”

She touched his hand gently with her own little fingers :

“Sir Folko, what are those memories?”

He drew his hand away and laughed, not joyously, but that laugh which has less joy in it even than tears :

“Don't you know a proverb, Alma—‘N'éveillez pas le chat qui dort?’”

“But were the cat a tiger I would not fear it, if it were yours.”

“But *I* fear it.”

There was more meaning in that than little Alma guessed. The impetuous passion that had blasted his life and linked his name with the Trefusis would be, while his life lasted, a giant whose throes and mighty will would always hold him captive in his chains.

He was silent; he sat looking out of the window by which he sat, and playing with a branch of the white rose that stood in a stand among the other flowers he had sent her. His lips were pressed together, his eyebrows slightly contracted, his dark eagle eyes sad and troubled, as if he were looking far away—so he was—to a white headstone lying among fragrant violet tufts under the old elms at Vigne, with the spring sunshine in its fitful lights and shadows playing fondly round the name of the only woman who had loved him at once fondly and unselfishly.

Alma looked at him long and wistfully, some of his darker shadows flung on her own bright and sunny nature—as the yew-tree throws the dark beauty of its boughs over the golden cowslips that nestle at its roots.

At last she bent forward, lifting her soft frank eyes to his.

"Sir Folko, where are your thoughts? Tell me; you may trust me."

Her voice won its way to his heart; he knew that interest, not curiosity, spoke in it, and he answered gently,

"With my mother."

It was the first time he had spoken of her to Alma—he never breathed her name to any one. Alma looked up at him, her face full of tenderness and pity.

"You loved her dearly?"

"Very dearly."

Alma's eyes filled with tears, a passion very rare with her.

"Tell me of her," she said, softly.

"No! I cannot talk of her."

"Because you loved her so much?"

"No! Because I killed her."

That was the great sorrow of his life; that his folly had cost him his name, and, as he considered, his honor, was less bitter to him than that it had cost his mother's life.

Alma, at his reply—uttered almost involuntarily under his breath—gazed at him, horror-stricken, with wild terror in her large eyes; yet De Vigne might have noticed that she did not shrink from him, but rather drew the closer to him. Her expression recalled his thoughts.

“Not that, not that,” he said, hastily. “My hand never harmed her, but my passions did. My own headlong and willful folly sent her to her grave. Child! you may well thank God if Temptation never enter your life. No man has strength against it.”

Alma’s face still spoke all the full yet silent sympathy that best chimed in with his haughty and fiery spirit, which craved and demanded the warmest, yet at the same time most delicate, comprehension. It was the sort of sympathy which lures on men to confessions which they would never make to another man—a sympathy which assures them that whatever sins they recount there will be pity and excuse made fondly for them.

For the first time De Vigne felt an inclination to disclose his marriage to Alma Tressillian; to tell her what he would have told to no other living being: of all his own madness had cost him, of the fatal revenge the Trefusis had taken, of the headlong impetuosity which had led him to raise the daughter of a beggar-woman to one of the proudest names in England, of the fatal curse which he had drawn on his own head, and the iron fetters which his own hand had forged. The words were already on his lips. I cannot tell what there was in the Little Tressillian to win upon him so, but certain it is that in another minute he would have bent his pride and laid bare his secret to her, if at that moment the door had not opened—to admit Alma’s quasi-governess, Miss Russell.

Alma was very right—our life hinges upon Opportunity!

De Vigne never again felt a wish to tell her of his marriage.

He rose, Alma rose too, sorry, for the first time in her life, to see her friend; and Miss Russell, a little, quietly-dressed, timid woman, the perfection of a *vieille fille*, (whose life, Alma has confessed to me, she made somewhat of a burden to her, with her heterodox opinions and wild spirits, and who must have been often horrified, poor lady! by her pupil's daring independence and imaginative flights,) looked with mild astonishment at Alma kneeling down before De Vigne, and at De Vigne's stately figure and statuesque head, which were not without a certain effect upon her—as on what daughter of Eve, however far gone in years or prudery, would they not have been?

De Vigne went up to her, with his “grand air” and his courtly manner, always most courtly where the recipients of it were in an inferior position to himself, and claimed his recollection. He had seen her once, before Boughton Tressillian's departure for Lorave—a fact entirely forgotten by him, but of which Alma had assured him. Miss Russell remembered him by dint of having had his name dinned into her ears all the years she had been with Alma, but looked upon him with some little disquietude nevertheless; for it is noticeable that *vieilles filles* who have escaped from our griffes rather more completely than they could have wished, invariably regard us as most dangerous beasts of prey.

De Vigne stayed with her some twenty minutes, chatting chiefly of old Tressillian; then he left, for he did not much care for his visit to Alma if it was not a *tête-à-tête*, and the roll of the tilbury grew fainter and fainter as he drove down the road, remembering, for the first time, what he had come to tell the girl, that her picture was accepted by *the Society*.

As soon as he was gone, Miss Russell took it upon herself to expostulate with her quondam pupil as to the non-advisability of such tête-à-tête calls. She had known nothing of them before, living in a family at Windsor, which she was seldom able to leave for a visit to her old pet and favorite.

"Now do be quiet, you dear old thing!" cried Alma, at the first of Miss Russell's prudent periods. "You know your dreadfully stiff ideas were the only rock on which you and I ever quarreled. I never subscribed to them, and never shall. I have told you how I met Major de Vigne. He is the best friend on earth I have. He is never weary of doing me kindnesses. There is no generosity which he would stop at if I would accept it. He finds purchasers for my pictures, and praises them, and gets them put in exhibitions—he who has Guidos, and Poussins, and Landseers on his walls! He is noble-hearted, honorable, generous as the sunlight; and the royalty of his intellect is only equaled by the royalty of his heart! And then you tell me it is 'improper' to receive him, 'unwise' to like him. You might as well tell the flowers not to like the clouds, whose morning shade and evening dews make all their life and beauty!"

Miss Russell sighed. Well she might, poor luckless lady! for Alma's vehement rush of words, and her impassioned Italian gesticulation, to say nothing of her opinions, were calculated to overwhelm and crush a whole legion of such timid and gentle mortals as her poor governess.

"But, my dear child," she ventured mildly, "it is not the custom for young ladies, situated as you are, to receive the visits of young unmarried men—you must allow that?"

"I allow it," laughed Alma; "but, to begin with, there are few young ladies situated as I am, all alone in a horrible farm-house, with nothing in the world to talk to but a

goldfinch and a dog, (till he came and gave me my darling Pauline, look at her beautiful green and yellow and scarlet feathers!) Heaven forefend there should be, poor things! for it is by no means a delightful existence, without society, fun, or pleasant sauce of any kind! In the second, as I have often assured you, only you never would believe me, the ways of the world are not always right ways, and very seldom agreeable ones; and a little nature, and gratitude, and warm feeling are worth all their conventionalities and prudence. In the third, *his* visits might honor a queen, and they are the single joy of my life. Even the brute Caliban knew how to feel grateful, and shall I be lower and less quick in feeling than Major de Vigne's dogs and horses, who love him for his care, his kindness, and his gentleness?"

Miss Russell was puzzled, as your worldly-wise people sometimes are by those who are only nature-wise.

"Be as grateful as you please, my love; Heaven forbid I should seem to teach you ingratitude or mistrust; but don't you know, my dear child, that women, especially young and inexperienced ones, Alma, cannot be too circumspect in their conduct? They are so easily misconstrued, and, unhappily, my dear child, men are so apt to take advantage of——"

Alma's face glowed crimson in an instant, and her eyes flashed fiercely with that Southern passion which lay underneath her laughing, careless gayety of nature.

"I understand you," she said, haughtily, "but I am not afraid of being 'misconstrued,' or 'taken advantage of,' as you suggest. Men of the world are truer judges of character than our censorious and purblind sex, and a gentleman of honor is as safe a friend as the world holds."

"I hope so," sighed Miss Russell, quite bewildered; "*but I have certainly heard something against Major De*

Vigne. I cannot remember what, but I think—I fancy—he has been very wild——”

“Possibly,” said Alma, her little soft lips curling contemptuously. “Whatever you may have heard I shall request you to keep it to yourself. I will hear nothing, even from you, detrimental to Major De Vigne.”

Miss Russell was shut up! the stronger character of the young one cowed the weaker disposition of the elder and more timid woman. Alma changed the subject, and busied herself, in her rapid and graceful way, in making her governess welcome, in showing her her pictures, in introducing Sylvo and Pauline to her notice, in a hundred pretty little *petits soins*, which sat very charmingly on her, though she was about the least “domestic” young lady I ever came across; but there was a lack of that entire confidence in Miss Russell, and joyous pleasure in her society, which her pet pupil had always before demonstrated. Poor cause: Miss Russell had spoken against the god of her idolatry—De Vigne.

There are gods still, as in the days of Ancient Priestcraft, on whose altars are offered up with tears of blood no holocaust less costly than a human heart—quivering with mortal life, throbbing with vital pain!

PART THE TWELFTH.

I.

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA.

MAY came; it was the height of the season; town was full; her Majesty had given her first levee; Belgravia and Mayfair were occupied; the Ride and the Ring were full, too, at six o'clock every day, and the thousand toys with which Babylon amuses her grown babies were ready, among others the Exhibition of Fine Arts, where, on its first day, De Vigne and I went to lounge away an hour, chiefly for the great entertainment and fun afforded to persons of sane mind by the eccentricities of the pre-Raphaelite gentlemen.

In the entrance we met Lady Molyneux and her daughter, Sabretasche and his young Grace of Regalia with them. It was easy to see which the Viscountess favored the most. Regalia would have made her a charming son-in-law, being weak, good-natured, and rich à ravir; but as he was small, sandy-haired, limited his criticisms to "Oh!" "Ah!" "I see!" "Really!" "Dooood fine!" etc., it was perhaps natural that Violet was more blinded to his irreproachable character and advantageous position than she ought to have been, and gave all her attention to the Colonel, with his silvery tongue and beautiful face, and explanations of art at once masterly and poetic, the explanations of a refined scholar and a profound critic.

"Are you come to be désenchanté with all living womanhood by the contemplation of Messrs. Millais and Hunt's *ideals*, Major De Vigne?" asked Violet, giving him her

hand, looking a very lovely sample of "living womanhood," in her dainty toilette and her perfect-fitting gloves, and her little cobweb black lace veil, than through which a pretty woman never looks prettier. Ladies said she was very extravagant in dress. She might be; she was naturally lavish; and worshiped instinctively all that was graceful in form or coloring; but I only know she dressed perfectly, and, what was better still, never *thought about it*.

"Perhaps we should suffer less disappointment if ladies *were* like Millais's ideals," smiled De Vigne. "From those rough, red-haired, long-limbed women we should never look for much perfection; whereas the faces and forms of our living beauties are rather like belladonna, beautiful to look at, but destruction to approach or trust!"

"You are incorrigible!" cried Violet, with a tiny shrug of her shoulders, "and forget that if belladonna is a poison to those who don't know how to use it, it is a medicine and a balm to those who do."

"But for one cautious enough to cure himself, how many unwary are poisoned for life!" laughed De Vigne.

He said it as a jest, to tease her, but a bitter memory prompted it.

"Send that fellah to Coventry, Miss Molyneux, do," lisped Regalia; "he's so dweadfully rude."

"Not yet; sarcasms are infinitely more refreshing than empty compliments," said Violet, with a scornful flash of her brilliant eyes. The little Duke was idiot enough to attempt to flatter Violet Molyneux, to whom the *pas* in beauty and talent was indisputably given. "Colonel Sabretasche, take my catalogue, I have not looked into it yet, and mark all our favorites for me. I am going to enjoy the pictures now, and talk to nobody."

A charming ruse on the young lady's part to keep Sabretasche at her side and make him talk to her, for they

passed over eleven pictures, and lingered over a twelfth, while he discoursed on the Italian and the French, the German and the English schools, with rapid sketches of past styles, and graphic anecdotes of Vernet and Leslie, in a manner that soon enabled them to lose Lady Molyneux, talking pieces out of Ruskin, with her glass up, to poor young Regalia, only suppressing his yawns and keeping his post from pure courtesy, though my lady was a very pretty woman, and, in her own opinion at least, as bewitching to a young fellow as her daughter, of whom, *entre nous*, she was not a little jealous.

"Why have you never been to see me for four days?" asked Violet, standing before one of the glorious sea pieces of Stanfield.

Sabretasche hesitated a moment.

"I have had other engagements."

Violet's eyes flashed. "I beg your pardon, Colonel Sabretasche; not being changeable myself, it did not occur to me that you were so. However, if it is a matter of so little moment to you, it is of still less to me."

"Did I not tell you," whispered Sabretasche, "that I like too well to be with you to dare to be with you much? You cannot have forgotten our conversation at Richmond?"

The color rushed into Violet's cheeks under her little filmy veil.

"No," she answered, hurriedly; "but you promised me your friendship, and you have no right to take it away. I do not pretend to understand you, I do not seek to know more than you choose to tell me, but since you once promised to be my friend, you have no right to behave capriciously to me."

"Violet, for God's sake do not break my heart!" broke

in Sabretasche, his voice scarcely above his breath, but full of such intense anguish that Violet was startled. "Your friend I *cannot* be; anything dearer I *may not* be. Forget me and all interest in my fate. Of your interest in me I am utterly unworthy; and I would rather that you should credit all the evil that the world attributes to me, and, crediting it, learn to hate me, than think that I, in my own utter selfishness, had thrown one shade on your young life, mingled one regret with your bright future."

They were both leaning against the rail; no one saw Violet's face as she answered him.

"To speak of hate from me to you is folly, and it is too late to command forgetfulness. If you had no right to make me remember you, you have still less right to bid me forget you."

"Violet, come and look at this picture of Lance's, Regalia talks of buying it," said her mother's cold, slow, languid voice.

Violet turned, and though she smiled and spoke about the picture in question with some of her old vivacity and self-possession, her face had lost its brilliant tinting, and her little white teeth were set together.

De Vigne joined them at that minute.

"Miss Molyneux, I want to show you a painting in the Middle Room. It is just your style, I fancy. Will you come and look at it?"

We all went into the Middle Room after him, Sabretasche too, pausing occasionally to look at some of the luckless exiles near the ceiling with his lorgnon. By-the-way, what a farce it is to hang pictures where one must have a lorgnon to look at them; the exhibition of the few is the suppression of the many!

"Voilà!" said De Vigne. "Am I wrong? Don't you like it?"

"Like it!" echoed Violet. "O Heaven, how beautiful!"

Quite forgetful that she was the center of a crowd who were looking at her much more than at the paintings on the walls, she stood, the color back in her cheeks, her eyes lifted to the picture, her whole face full of reverent love and fervent adoration for the beauty it embodied. The painting deserved it. It was Love—old in story, yet new to every human heart—the love of Francesca and Paolo, often essayed by artists, yet never rendered as the poet would have had it, as it was rendered here.

There were no vulgarities of a fabled Hell; there were the two, alone in that true torture—

Ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria—

yet happy because together. Her face and form were in full light, his in shadow. Heart beating against heart, their arms round each other, they looked down into each other's eyes. On his face were the fierce passions, against which he had no strength, mingled with the deep and yearning regret for the fate he had drawn in with his own.

On hers, lifted up to him, was all the love at sight of which he who beheld it "swooned even as unto death," the love—

—piacer si forte

Che come vedi ancor non m'abbandona—

the love which made hell, paradise, and torture together dearer than heaven alone. Her face spoke, her clinging arms circled him as though defying power in heaven strong enough to part them; her eyes looked into his with unutterable tenderness, anguish for his sorrow, ecstasy in his presence! and on her soft lips, still trembling with the memory of that first kiss which had been their ruin, was

all the heroism and all the passion, all the fidelity, enthusiasm, and joy in him alone, spoken in that one sentence—

Questi che mai da me non fia diviso!

The picture told its tale; crowds gathered round it; and those who could not wholly appreciate its wonderful coloring and skill were awed by its living humanity, its passionate tenderness, its exquisite beauty.

Violet stood, regardless of the men and women around her, looking up at the Francesca, a fervent response to it, a yearning sympathy with the warm human love and passionate joys of which it breathed, written on her mobile features.

She turned away from it with a heavy sigh, and the flush deepened in her cheeks as she met Sabretasche's eyes, who now stood behind her.

"You are pleased with that picture," he said, bending his head.

"Is it not beautiful?" cried Violet, passionately. "It is not to be criticised; it is to be loved. It is art and poetry and human nature blended in one. Whoever painted it interprets art as no other artist here can do. He has loved and felt his subject, and makes others in the force of his genius feel and love it too. Listen how every one is praising it! They all admire it, yet not nine out of ten of these people can understand it. Tell me who painted it, quick! Now you are looking in the last room, and it is 226, Middle Room. Oh! give me the catalogue!"

She took it out of his hands with that rapid vivacity which worried her mother so dreadfully as bad ton, and made her greatest charm to us, turned the leaves over with the greatest impatience till she reached "226. Paolo and Francesca—Vivian Sabretasche.

Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona,
Mi prese del costui piacer si forte,
Che come vedi ancor non m'abbandona
Amor condusse noi ad una morte."

She dropped the book; she turned to him with such intense delight that it was almost pain; she could not speak, but she held out her hand to him. Sabretasche took it for an instant as they leaned over the rail together in the security and "solitude of a crowd."

"Do not speak of it here," he whispered, as he bent down for the fallen catalogue.

Violet gave him a glance so full of sympathy, delight, and adoration, that she had no need of words.

"Pon my honor, Sabretasche," whispered little Regalia, "we're all so astonished—turning artist, eh? Never knew you exhibited. Splendid picture—ah—really!"

"You do me much honor," said Sabretasche, coldly—he hated the little puppy who was always dawdling after Violet—"but I should prefer not to be congratulated before a room full of people."

"On my life, old fellow, I envy you," said De Vigne, too low for any one to hear him; "not for being the talk of the room, for that is neither to your taste nor mine, but for having such magnificent talent as you have given us here."

"Cui bono?" said Sabretasche, with his slight smile, that was too gentle for discontent and too sad for cynicism.

"I had not an idea *whose* Francesca I was bringing Miss Molyneux to see," De Vigne continued. "How came you to exhibit this year?"

"Oh, I have been a dabbler in art a long time," laughed the Colonel. "Many of the Forty are my intimate friends; they would not have rejected anything I sent."

"They would have been mad to reject the Francesca;

they have nothing to compete with it on the walls. I wish you were in Poland Street, Sabretasche, that one could order of you. You are the first fine gentleman, since Sir George Beaumont, who has turned 'artiste véritable,' and you grace it better than he."

Sabretasche and his Grace of Regalia, De Vigne, and I, went to luncheon that day with Lady Molyneux in Lowndes Square, at which meal the Colonel made himself so intensely charming, lively, and winning, that the viscountess, strong as were her leanings to her pet duke, could but admit that he shone to very small advantage, and made a mental *mem.* never to invite the two together again. The Molyneux were devoting that morning to picture-viewing, the viscountess martyred secretly, her daughter genuinely delighted. And from the Royal Academy, after luncheon, they went to the French aquarelles, in Pall Mall, and thence to the Water-Color Exhibition, whither De Vigne and I followed them in his tilbury.

"I wonder what they will say to Alma's picture," said De Vigne, as we alighted. "I wish it may make a hit, as it is her livelihood now, poor child!"

Strange enough, it was before Alma's picture that we found most people in the room congregated; and Violet turned to us:

"Come and look here, Major De Vigne; this 'Louis Dix-sept in the Tower of the Temple,' by Miss Trevelyan—Trevanion—no, Tressillian—whoever she be—is the gem of the collection, to my mind. There is an unlucky green ticket on it, else I would purchase it. What enviable talent! I wish I were Miss Tressillian!"

"How rash you are!" said De Vigne. "How can you tell but what Miss Tressillian may be some masculine woman living in an entresol, painting with a clay pipe between her teeth, and horses and cows for veritable models

in a litter adjoining, dressing like George Sand, and deriving inspiration from gin?"

"What a shameful picture!" cried Violet, indignantly. "I do not know her, nor anything about her, it is true, but I am perfectly certain that the woman who realized and carried out this painting with so much delicacy and grace must have a delicate and graceful mind herself."

"Or," continued De Vigne, ruthlessly, "she may now, for anything you can tell, be a *vieille fille* who has consecrated her life to art, and grown old and ugly in the consecration, and who——"

"Be quiet, Major De Vigne, if you please," interrupted Violet. "I am perfectly certain, I told you, that the artist would correspond to the picture: Raphael was as beautiful as his paintings, Michael Angelo was of noble appearance, Mozart and Mendelssohn had faces full of music, Vernet is a fine military-looking man——"

"Fuseli, too, was," said De Vigne, mischievously, "remarkably like his grand archangels; Reynolds, in his brown coat and wig, is so poetic that one could have no other ideal of the 'Golden Age;' Turner's appearance was so artistic that one would have imagined him a farmer bent on crops; fat and snuffy Handel is the embodiment of the beauty of the *Cangio d'Aspetto*——"

"How tiresome you are!" interrupted Violet again. "I am establishing a theory; I don't care for facts—no theorists ever do in these days. I maintain that a graceful and ennobling art must leave its trace on the thought and mind and manners of its expositors, (I know you are going to remind me of Morland at the hedge-alehouse, of the 'bum-bailiff' and the 'little Jew-broker,' and of Nollkens making the writing-paper label for the single bottle of claret;) never mind, I keep to my theory, and I am sure that this *Miss Tressillian*, who has had the happiness to paint the

lovely face of that little Dauphin, would, if we could see her, correspond to it; and I envy her without the slightest hesitation."

"You have no need to envy any one," whispered Regalia.

Violet turned impatiently from him, and began to talk to Sabretasche about one of those ever-charming pictures of Mr. Edmund Warren. De Vigne looked at me and smiled, thinking with how much more grounds the little Tressillian had envied Violet Molyneux.

"I wish I could tell you half I feel about your Francesca," said Violet, lifting her eyes to Sabretasche's face, as they stood apart from anybody else in a part of the room little frequented, for there were few people there that morning, and those few were round Alma's pet picture. "You can never guess how I reverence that sublime genius of yours, how fully it speaks to my heart, how completely it reveals to me all your inner nature, which the world, much as it admires you, never sees or dreams of seeing."

Sabretasche bent his head; her words went too near home to him to let him answer them.

"All your pictures," Violet went on, "have seemed to me to bear the stamp of the most superb talent, but this—O Heaven, how beautiful it is! I might have known no other hand but yours could have called it into life. But I did not see it when we came to your studio. Have you long finished it?"

"I finished the painting two years ago; but three *months* ago I saw for the first time the face that answered my ideal, the face that expressed all that I would have expressed in Francesca. I effaced what I had painted, and in its stead I placed—yours."

Violet's eyes dropped; the delicate color in her cheeks wavered and deepened. She had been dimly conscious of a resemblance in the painting, and De Vigne's glance from

Francesca to herself had told her that he at the least saw it also; and, indeed, with the exception that Francesca's hair was golden where Violet's was chestnut, (possibly that gossiping Belgravia might not notice too strong a likeness,) the face of the painting, with its delicate and impassioned features, and the form, with its slight build and yet voluptuous graces, were singularly like her own.

Sabretasche looked closer at her; it was one of those dangerous moments when for any madness men can scarcely be held responsible.

"You could love like Francesca," he said, involuntarily.

It was not above his breath, but his face gave it all the eloquence it lacked, as hers all the response it needed.

She heard his short quick breathing as he stood beside her; she felt the passionate answer that rose to his lips; she knew that if ever a man's love was hers his was then. But he was silent, and when he spoke his voice was full of that utter anguish which had startled her twice before.

"Keep it, then, and give it to some man more worthy it than I!"

"Violet, my love, are you not tired of all this?" said Lady Molyneux, sweeping up. "It is half-past four, and I want to go to Swan and Edgar's. Pictures make one's head ache so; I was never so ill in my life as I was after the Sistine chapel."

Sabretasche took her to their carriage without another word between them; and I grieve to record it, it was most improper, unladylike, and utterly against the rules, but Violet pressed his hand between her little French-gloved fingers, as if he had just made her an offer rather than a refusal of love, and looked up in his eyes much as his Francesca's looked in Paolo's. But then Sabretasche was pale as death; she could see bitter suffering where others

only saw his usual urbane and courtly smile; and Violet Molyneux, happily for him, was not a conventional young lady, but only a fond, frank, tender, impressionable woman.

The next day, to our surprise, the Colonel asked for leave, got it, and went away.

"What the deuce is that for, Colonel?" said I. "Never been out of town in the season before, have you?"

"Just the reason why I should be now, my dear fellow," responded Sabretasche, lazily. "Twenty years of the same thing is enough to tire one of it, if the thing were paradise itself; and when it comes to be only dusty pavés, whitebait dinners, and club gossip, ennui is very pardonable. The medical men tell me, if I don't give up pleasure for a little time, pleasure will give up me. You know, though I am strong enough in muscle, I am not over-strong physically; so I shall go over to the Continent, and look at it in spring, before there are the pests of English touring about, with Murrays, carpet-bags, and sandwiches."

He vouchsafed no more on the subject, but went. His departure was talked of in clubs and boudoirs; women missed him as they would have missed no other man in London, for Sabretasche was universal censor, referee, regulator of fashion, his bow was the best thing in the Park, his fêtes at Richmond the most charming and exclusive of the season; but people absent on tours are soon forgotten, like dead leaves sucked under a water-wheel and whirled away; and after the first day, perhaps, nobody save De Vigne and I remarked how triste his house in Park Lane looked with the green persiennes closed over its sunny bay-windows.

II.

PALAMON AND ARCITE.

A FEW days after his departure I cantered down the Ride with Violet Molyneux.

"This will be a brilliant season, I think," said I, "and an unusually long one. They were talking of parliament not closing till July, as there is so much business to be done. If such a thing ever happened as to detain the two Houses over the 12th, I am sure my father would have a fit of apoplexy, and all St. Stephen's with him."

"Yes," answered Violet, smiling, "the Lords and Commons may be very attached to the People, but they are still fonder of their Purdey; winding red-tape is nothing to spinning a twenty-pound salmon. Well! they are much more harmlessly employed in the heather than in the cabinet; they had better have a drive of deer than an embroglio of nations."

"Philanthropically I agree with you; personally I can't, for few things would give me such individual pleasure as being ordered off to the Crimea. I envy all those fellows who are gone or going; but we have lost our chef without the war. You know, of course, that Sabretasche has taken himself off just as the season opens?"

"He is gone to the south of France, is he not?"

How calm her voice, how impassive her eyes! Oh, society, society, how you teach us to let the wolf gnaw our vitals without say or sign!

"I can't imagine what took him there, can you?"

Self-possessed she was, but her cheeks flushed. They were very pale when I met her.

"For his health, I understood. Will he—do you know" (she hesitated)—"is he likely to be away long?"

"Some little time, I fancy. I am sorry he is gone; there is no man, except De Vigne, I like better, and he will be very much missed; he is so fêted and admired and sought. Just when all town is talking of that miraculous work of art, that Francesca of his, he chooses to leave. He is an enigmatical fellow."

Her face was very pale again now, and her eyes were not impassive, do what she would. She struck her chestnut sharply, and got some paces before me.

"We go so slowly, let us gallop back to papa."

"Did Vy Molyneux refuse Sabretasche," said Monckton, as she rode out by Apsley House with her father and mother, "that he went off like a shot, I wonder?"

Curly, who heard him, shouted with laughter. "Sabretasche refused! By Jove, what an idea! No, that's a grief (or a blessing) he'll never come to. All of 'em go down before him, married, widowed, and single. Refused! By George, I wish he heard you! No, it's more probable that he has made Violet desperate after him, (and that she is it's pretty easy to see,) and is gone off for fear Jockey Jack should ask him his intentions; for Sabretasche, I am very sure, would think no woman worth the trouble of marrying, and quite right, too!"

Whatever his motive, the Colonel was gone to that golden land the south of France, where the foamy Rhône speeds on her course, and Marseilles lies by the free blue sea, and the Pic du Midi rears its stately head over the purple vineyards of France and the green sierras of Spain. The Colonel was gone, and all the clubs, and drawing-rooms, and journals were speaking of his Francesca; speaking, for once, unanimously in admiration for the perfect and wonderful union of art and truth. The Francesca was the theme of the day in artistic circles, its masterly conception and unexceptionable handling would from any

pencil have gained it fame; in fashionable circles it only needed the well-known name of Vivian Sabretasche to give it at once an interest and a brevet of value. The Francesca was talked of by everybody, and not talked of much less was the fact that the first day of its exhibition Sabretasche had presented it to Viscount Molyneux, perhaps the man in all town least calculated to appreciate either the art or the gift. Strangely enough, the picture most appreciated in another line by the papers and the virtuosi, was the Little Tressillian's water-color, which, with its subject, its treatment, and the exceedingly beautiful and truthful rendering of the boy's face, attracted more attention than any woman's picture had done for a long time; the art reviews were almost unanimous in its praise; certain faults were pointed out—reviewers must always find *some* as a sort of brevet of their own discernment—but for all that, Alma's first picture was a very decided success, and would have been thought a still more wonderful one if they had known that the artist was a girl of eighteen, whose sole instruction had been a few lessons in the studio of an Italian artist.

Not long after the exhibition, De Vigne, one morning after early parade, after breakfasting, having a quiet smoke, and reading the papers, rang the bell, ordered his horse round, put some of the journals in his coat-pocket, and rode toward Richmond, with the double purpose of having a cool morning gallop before the—as he ungratefully termed it—bother of the day commenced, and of seeing Alma, which he had not done since the success of her picture. He was not long doing the seven miles to the little farm. He always rode fast; I believe it would have been as great a misery to him to be obliged to do a thing slowly as it would have been to Sabretasche to do it *quickly*! He enjoyed the fresh May morning, the sweet

scent of the budding trees, the free, pure air of early spring which gave him something of the elasticity of his earlier years. His nature was naturally a very happy one; his character was too strong, vigorous, and impatient to allow melancholy to become habitual to him; he was too young for his fate, however it preyed upon his pride, to be constantly before him; his wife was, indeed, a bitter memory to him, but she was *but* a memory to him now, and a man imperceptibly forgets what is never recalled to him. Except occasional deep fits of gloom and an unvarying cynical sarcasm, De Vigne had cured himself of the utter despondency into which his marriage had first thrown him; the pace at which he lived, if the pleasures were stale, was such as does not leave a man much time for thought, and now, as he rode along, with no sound on his ear except the merry ring of his horse's hoofs on the hard road, some of his naturally bright spirits came back to him, as they generally do, by-the-way, with riding to a man as passionately fond of it as he.

"At home, of course?" he said to Mrs. Lee, as she opened the door to him—said it with that careless hauteur which was the result of habit, not of intention. De Vigne was very republican in his theories, but the patrician came out in him malgré lui; it is all very well to talk of equality, but I never knew a man yet with the sang pur in him who did not instinctively feel the difference between it and the mud of the gutters, and show that he felt it too, however grand his theorizing the other way.

"Yes, sir," said the old nurse, giving him her lowest curtesy, and gazing on him with admiring eyes, for, as she used to say, she "hadn't lived among the gentlefolk without knowing a real gentleman when she saw one," "Miss Alma's at home. Where should she be, poor little lady, with not a soul to take her out anywhere, and tell her not

to spoil her eyes over them nasty paintings? Yes, sir, she's at home, and there's a young gentleman a calling on her. I'm glad of it; she wants somebody to talk to bad enough. 'Tain't right, you know, sir, for a merry child like that to be cooped up alone; you might as well put a bird in a cage and tie its beak up, so that it couldn't sing! It's that young gentleman as came with you, sir, the other day."

De Vigne stroked his moustaches and smiled.

"Oh, ho! Master Curly's found his way, has he? I thought it would be odd if those *longs yeux bleus* didn't do some damage in their proper sphere. I dare say she'll be a confounded little flirt, like all the rest of them, when she has the opportunity," was his reflection, more natural than complimentary, as he opened the door of Alma's room, where the little lady was sitting, as usual, in the window, among the birds and flowers De Vigne had sent her; and Curly, handsome dog that he was, graceful as a young Greek—fit ideal for Alcibiades or Catullus while they were in their twenties, their Falernian yet full of flavor, and their rose wreaths still with the morning dew upon them—lying back in a chaise longue, talking to her quite as softly and far more interestedly than he was wont to talk to the beauties in his mother's drawing-room.

But Alma cut him short in the middle of a sentence, as she turned her head at the opening of the door and sprang up joyously at the sight of De Vigne.

"How glad I am! I have been wanting to see you so all this week. The days are so long, always looking for you and never seeing you; but how good you are to come so early."

"Not good at all. I was not in bed till six this morning, and liked an early ride; the air is beautiful to-day, one only wants to be fishing in a mountain burn to enjoy it

thoroughly. "Hallo, Curly!" said De Vigne, throwing himself into an arm-chair; "how are you? How did *you* manage to get up so early? I thought you never were up till after one, except on Derby Day?"

"Or other temptation greater still," said Curly, with an eloquent glance of his long violet eyes at Alma.

"Do you mean that for a compliment to me?" said the Little Tressillian, with that gay, rebellious, moqueur air which was so pretty in her. "In the first place, I do not believe it, for there is no woman on the face of the earth who could attempt to rival a horse; and in the second, I should not thank you for it if I did, for compliments are only fit for empty heads to feed on."

"Meaning, you think yours the very reverse of empty?" said De Vigne, quietly.

"Certainly, it is not empty. I am not a boarding-school girl, monsieur," said Alma, indignantly. "I have filled it with what food I can get for it, and I know at least enough to feel that I know nothing—the first step to wisdom the sages say."

"But if you dislike compliments you might at least accept homage," said Curly, smiling.

"Homage? Oh! yes, as much as you like. I should like to be worshiped by the world, and petted by a few."

"I dare say you would," said De Vigne, stroking her little black kitten, elaborately decorated by Alma in a collar of blue ribbon and gold beads. "I can't say your desires are characterized by great modesty."

"Well, I speak the truth," said Alma, naïvely. "A great deal of women's modest speeches are great falsehoods, on whose telling, however, society smiles as 'the thing.' I *should* like to be admired by the thousands, and loved just by one or two."

"You have only to be seen to have your first wish," said

Curly, softly, "and only to be known to have much more than your second."

Alma turned away impatiently; she had a sad knack of showing when she was annoyed.

"Really you are intolerable, Captain Brandling. You spoil conversation utterly. I say those things because I mean them, not to make you flatter me. I shall talk only to Sir Folko, to Major De Vigne, for he alone understands me, and answers me properly."

With which lecture to Curly the little lady twisted her low chair nearer to De Vigne, and looked up in his face, very much as spaniels look up in their masters', liking a kick from them better than a caress from a stranger.

Curly, sweet-tempered though he was, was a trifle irritated—he was so used to having it all his own way—a very carelessly conquering, lazy Young-England way, too—and was a little astonished at being so summarily put aside by this little Tressillian, whom he had come to see chiefly for the sake of her bright-blue eyes—partly because she had puzzled him, partly (pardon, mademoiselle!—the best of us will think so of the best of you till we have tried you) because he thought he could say what he liked to her, frank, free, and unprotected as she was, and partly because he wanted to see how De Vigne really stood with her; a problem he did not make out any clearer now, for though Alma was certainly very fond of him, she was much too candid about it, Curly reasoned, for anything like love; and De Vigne's calm, amused, quizzical, yet guardian-like manner over her was still further removed by many miles from the grande passion.

But Curly was very sweet-tempered, and in a second he was all right again.

"You are cruelly unjust, Miss Tressillian," he said, playfully. "*I* was telling the truth—a thing you seem greatly

to patronize—and you shut me up as abruptly as if I were committing a crime. You see it was impossible for me to know your tastes. De Vigne has an immense advantage over me in having known you before I did.”

Alma’s eloquent eyes looked as if she thought De Vigne had immense advantages over him in many other respects, but she was too much of a lady to say so of course. She made him a pretty careless bow, as if she was tired of the subject, and turned to De Vigne:

“Have you seen Miss Molyneux lately?” She was rather jealous of Miss Molyneux, having ridden off on an idea that De Vigne saw a great deal of Violet and admired her exceedingly.

“Yes; and not long ago I heard Miss Molyneux envying you!”

“Me! Whatever for? *I* envy *her*, if you like!” cried Alma, brushing up the kitten’s hair becomingly. “How does she know me? What has she heard about me? Who has told her anything of me?”

“Gently, gently, *de grâce!*” cried De Vigne. “I don’t know that she has heard anything of you, or that anybody has told her anything about you; but she has seen something of yours, and admired it exceedingly.”

“My picture?” asked Alma, breathlessly.

“Your picture; and she said that whoever the artist might be who had painted the lovely face of the boy, she envied her, and wished that she could change places with her.”

“She would not if she knew,” said Alma, with that deep sadness which just now and then welled out of her gay, sunshiny nature, as if in evidence of what the passionate, and generous, and tender character would suffer when she came to the grief De Vigne had prophesied for her.

“Did she go to the exhibition with you, then?”

"Yes; or rather, I went with her."

"How I hate her!" said Alma, with sufficient vehemence, tearing a bit of drawing-paper into strips.

"Et pourquoi?" asked De Vigne, in surprise.

"Because you are always with her, and she is in your circle, and you go about with her, and admire her, and I am shut up here; I must wait till you choose to come and see me, and I have no society to shine in, and——Oh! I hate her!" cried Alma, energetically. I dare say she *could* have hated, not rancorously, but very hotly while it lasted, as most people can who love hotly also.

De Vigne laughed; he was used to Alma's enthusiastic expressions, and set them down to her Southern blood, attaching no importance to them.

"Amiable, I must say, Miss Tressillian, and not very grateful; for Violet Molyneux is prepared to be devoted to you, if she could know you, for having painted that exquisite picture, as she thinks it."

"Ah! my picture!" cried Alma, joyously, her hate and her wrongs passing away like summer shadows off a sunny landscape. "What has been said about it? Has it been liked? Who has seen it? Do the papers mention it? Have the——"

"One question at a time, please, then perhaps I may contrive to answer them," said De Vigne, smiling; "though the best answer to them all will be for you to read these. Here, see how you like that!"

He took a critique by a well-known Art-critic out of his pocket, and gave it to her, pointing out, among many condemnatory notices of other works, the few brief laudatory words in praise of her own, worth more than whole pages of warmer laudation but less discriminating criticism.

"How delightful! how glad I am! Oh, this is beautiful!—this is something like the realization of my dreams!"

cried Alma, rapturously, her eyes beaming, and her whole face in a rose flush of ecstatic delight.

"Wait a minute; reserve your raptures," said De Vigne, putting the *Times*, the *Atlas*, and other papers before her. "If the first review sends you into such a state of exultation, we shall lose sight of you altogether over these."

"Oh, they make me so happy!" exclaimed Alma, when she had read them, with none of the dignity and tranquil pride becoming to a successful artist, but with a wild, gleeful, triumphant delight most amusing, De Vigne told me, to behold. "You won't quite forget me for Miss Molyneux now; she hasn't her name in the papers, has she? I am so delighted! I used to think my pictures would be liked if people saw them; but I never hoped they would be admired like this; and the beauty of it is, that it is all owing to you; without you I should never have had it!"

"Indeed you would, though. I have done nothing. Your picture was clever; it has been seen, and has had its due appreciation, as all clever things have, sooner or later. You have nothing to thank me for, I can assure you."

"I have!" repeated Alma, resolutely. "You knew how I could exhibit it; you did it all for me; but *for* you my picture would now be hanging here, unnoticed and unpraised. You were the first person who admired it, and you know well enough that your few words are of more value to me than all these!" With which Alma tossed over the table, with contemptuous energy, the reviews which had charmed her so intensely a minute or two before.

"Very unwise," said De Vigne, dryly. "These will make your fame and your money; my words can do you no good whatever."

"They do me the best good," said Alma, indignantly. "Do you suppose if you did not like my pictures, that I should care for anybody else's praise?"

"I should say so; I don't see why you shouldn't," said De Vigne. He took a most malicious pleasure in teasing her, in making her eyes grow dark and flash, and the color come into her cheeks in her vehement and demonstrative vexation.

She didn't vouchsafe him any words now, though, but twisted herself away from him with one of her rapid, un-English movements.

"How courteous he is! You are very forbearing, Miss Tressillian, to put up with him!" said Curly, who had been listening, half amusedly, half irritably, to this conversation, which excluded him.

Alma was angry with De Vigne herself, but she was not going to let any one else be so too.

"Forbearing? What do you mean? I should be very ungrateful if I were not thankful for such a friend."

"Now that is too bad," said Curly, plaintively. "I, who really admire your most marvelous talent, only get tabooed for being a flatterer, while he is thought perfection, and pleases by being most abominably rude."

"You had better not measure yourself with him, Captain Brandling," said Alma, with that mischievous impudence which sat well upon her, though no other woman, I believe, could have had it with such impunity.

"Vous me piquez, mademoiselle," said Curly, a great deal too sweet a disposition to be annoyed by pre-eminence given to another, especially to De Vigne, for whom he retained some of the old feeling of Frestonhills vassalage, yet sufficiently taken with the fascinating Little Tressillian to be vexed not to be higher in her good graces. "You will tempt me by your very prohibition to enter the

lists with him. I should not care to dispute the belt with him in most things, but for such a prize——”

“What nonsense are you talking, Curly,” said De Vigne, with that certain chill hauteur now so customary to him, but which Alma had never yet seen in him. “A prize to be fought for must be disputed. Don’t bring hot-pressed compliments here to spoil the atmosphere.”

“That’s right, take my part,” interrupted Alma, not understanding his speech as Curly understood it. “You see, Captain Brandling, that sort of high-flown flattery is no compliment; if the man mean it, it says little for his intellect, for we are none of us angels without wings, as you call us; and if he do not mean it, it says little for ours, for it is easy to tell when a man is really liking or only laughing at us.”

“Indeed!” said Curly. “I wish we were as clear when ladies were liking or laughing at us; it would save us a good many disappointments, when enchanting forms of life and light, who have softly murmured tenderest words when they stole our hearts away in tulle illusion at a hunt ball, bow to us as chillily as to a first introduction when we meet them afterward en Amazone in the Ride, with old Lord Adolphus Fitzpoodle, as rich as he is gouty, on their off-side.”

“Serve you right for being so credulous,” said De Vigne, tickling the kitten with the end of his riding-whip. “Women are either actresses or fools; if they are amiable they are stupid, and if they are clever they are artful.”

“Like Thackeray’s heroines,” suggested Curly.

“Exactly; shows how well the man knows life as it is, not as it should be, for I always hold that the wiser the mind the better ought to be the heart. But the first thing the world teaches a clever woman is to banish her feelings.

Women may thrive on talent, they are certain to go to rack and ruin on feeling; few enough of them have any, and a good thing for them, too."

"I don't agree with you," said Alma, looking up, ready for a combat.

"Don't you, petite?" laughed De Vigne. "I think you will when you have a few more years over your head, and have seen the world a little."

"No, I do not agree with you," returned the Little Tressillian, decidedly, "that life's first lesson is to crush down your feelings both to men and women. I believe that in proportion as you feel so do you suffer; but I deny that all talented women are actresses. Where will you go for all your noblest actions but to women of intellect and mind? Sappho's heart inspired the genius which has come down to us through such lengthened ages. Was it not heart which has immortalized Héloïse? Was it not intellect, joined to their passionate love for their country, which have placed the deeds of Polycrita, Hortensia, Hersillia, Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucauld among the records of patriotism? One of the fondest loves we have heard of was the love of Vittoria Colonna for Pescara, of the woman who ranks only second to Petrarch, the friend of Cardinal Pope, and Bembo, and Catarini, the adored of Michael Angelo, the admired of Ariosto! Oh, you are very wrong; where you find the glowing imagination, there, too, will you find as ardent affections; where there is expansive intellect, there, and there only, will be charity, tolerance, clear perception, just discrimination; with a large brain, a large heart, the more cultured the intelligence, the more sensitive the susceptibilities. Lucy Edgermond would make your tea for you tolerably, and head your table respectably, and blush where she ought, and say Yes and No like a well-bred woman, but in Corinne alone will you find pas-

sion to beat with your own, intellect to match with your own, sympathy, comprehension, elevation, all that a woman *should* give to the man she loves!"

A Corinne in her own way I can fancy she looked, too, with her blue eyes scintillating like two stars in her earnestness, all her own intelligence and talent stamped on her high-arched brow and on her mobile lips; her little silver-toned voice rising and falling in impassioned vehemence, accompanied with her vivacious and unconscious gesticulation, a trick, probably, of her foreign blood. Curly listened to her with amazement and delight, this was something quite new to him; it was not so new to De Vigne, but it touched him with something deeper, more like regret than amusement. A glimpse of the golden land is great pain when we know the door is locked and the key irrevocably lost. It brought over him again his old sarcasm and gloom.

"Do you suppose, petite," he said, with a bitter smile, "that if there *were* Corinnes in the land men would be such fools as to go and take the Lucys of modern society in their stead? Heaven knows, if there were women like what you describe, we might be better men; more earnest in our lives, more faithful in our loves. But you draw from the ideal, I from the real, two altitudes very far wide apart—as far apart, my child, as dawn and midnight."

His tone checked and saddened Alma's bright and enthusiastic but very impressionable nature. She gave a deep, heavy sigh.

"It is midnight with you, I am afraid, and I do so want it to be noon. I wish you would believe in me, at least."

He answered with a laugh, not a real one.

"Too much to promise; I will believe in you as soon as I do in anybody; and as for its being midnight with me, if it is, it is like midnight at a bal d'Opéra, with plenty of gaslights, transparencies, music, and amusement enough

to send the sun jealous, and making believe the day has dawned."

"But, then, don't the gaslights, and transparencies, and all the rest of your *bal d'Opéra* look tawdry and garish when the day is really up and on them?"

"We never let the daylight in," laughed De Vigne; "and won't remember that we ever had any brighter light than our colored lamps. Why should we? They do well enough for all intents and purposes."

Alma shook her head:

"They won't content you always."

"Oh yes they will; I have no desires now but to live without worry, and die in some good hard fight in harness, like my father."

Alma struck him on the arm with his own riding switch, which she had taken from him to play with the kitten.

"You are naughty and cruel: you say that only to vex me. Do you suppose at thirty-five that you have done with life?"

"Done with life! Certainly not, unless I come to a violent death, as most of my ancestors have done before me. No, my health and my strength are perfect, thank Heaven, notwithstanding I have done my best to impair them; but I have excluded passions, desires, and impulses out of my life—they cost me a vast deal too dear."

Alma looked at him incredulously, with her eyebrows raised.

"I should have thought you too clever a man of the world to talk such folly," said the little lady, impatiently. "In all the vigor, strength, and glory of early manhood, do you suppose it possible for you to ice yourself into a deliberate lifeless stoicism closing round you, as its stony home shuts in the lily-encrinite? You may fancy your nature is chilled forever, (though why it should be I cannot

imagine,) but be very sure it will rouse itself sooner or later."

"I hope not, that's all I can say," returned De Vigne; "but though you may wake up a sleeping dog, you can't a dead one; don't you know that, young lady?"

"But from a dead phoenix there will rise a new one."

"A phoenix! an unreal thing, a poetic myth! You choose your metaphor badly for your theory, like all these enthusiasts, Curly, eh? Pin them to fact, they are undone in a moment. What! are you going? I'll come with you—that is, if you are going back to town."

"Yes I am," said Curly. "I'm going to a confounded déjeuner in Palace Gardens, that little flirt's, Jerry Mab, I beg her pardon, the Honorable Geraldine Maberly. I shall barely get back in time; it's one o'clock, I vow. How time slips in some places! If I promise to leave compliments, *i.e.* in your case, truth, behind me, may I not come again? Pray be merciful, and allow me."

"How can I prevent you?" said Alma, in a laughing unconsciousness of Curly's meaning glances. "Certainly, come if you like; it is kind of you to think of it, for I am very dull here all alone. I am no philosopher, you know, and cannot make a virtue of necessity, and pretend to take my tub and cabbage-leaves in preference to a causeuse and delicate mayonnaise."

"Capricious, like all your sex. You are asking for compliments now, Alma. *On ne loue d'ordinaire que pour être loué*," said De Vigne, dryly.

"Am I? I did not mean it so," answered the girl, innocently.

"Nor did I take it so," said Curly, bending toward her as he took her hand; "so I shall not try to say how much I thank you for your permission, but only avail myself of it as often as I can, for the kindness will certainly be to me."

De Vigne stood looking disdainfully on, stroking his moustaches, and thinking, I dare say, what arrant flirts all women were at heart, and what fools men were to pander to their vanities.

He bid her good morning with that careless hauteur which he had often with everybody else but very rarely with the Little Tressillian. Curly's horse was at the door, but his groom had ridden farther down the road with De Vigne's. While he stood at the door waiting for it, he heard Alma's voice:

"Come back a minute."

He went back, as in courtesy bound.

"Did you want me?"

"Yes. Why did you speak so crossly to me?"

"I, crossly! I was not aware of it."

"But I was, and it was not kind of you, Sir Folko."

"Why will you persist in calling me like that knight sans peur et sans reproche?" said De Vigne, impatiently. "I tell you I have nothing in common with him—with his pure life and his spotless shield. He did no evil; I do—Heaven knows how much! He surmounted his temptations; I have always succumbed to mine. He had a conscience at ease; mine, if it were a tender one, might be as great a torture as the rack. His past was one of wise thoughts and noble deeds; mine can show neither the one nor the other."

"Of your life you know best; but in your character I choose to see the resemblance, if you choose to see the difference, between you and Montfaçon," replied Alma, always resolute to her own opinion. "Was he not a man of experience, a man who feared nothing, who was fierce to his foes and generous to those who trusted him? As for his past, he had probably drawn experience from error, as men ever do, and learnt wisdom out of folly. And as

for his stainless shield, is not your haughty De Vigne crest as unsullied as when it passed to you?"

"No," said De Vigne, fiercely. "My folly stained it, and the stain is the curse of my life. Child, why did you speak of such things? If you care for my friendship, you must never speak to me of my past."

His face was stern, his dark eyes stormy, and full of the gloom and remorseless pride her words had suddenly awakened—deadly memories were stirring up in him. Most women might have been afraid of him in his haughty anger. She was not. She looked up at him, bewildered, it is true, but with a strange mingling of girlish tenderness and woman's passion, both unconscious of themselves.

"Oh, I will not! Do forgive me. You know I would never willingly say anything to anger you. You do believe me, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, I believe you," said De Vigne, hastily. "Don't exalt me into a god, Alma, that's all, for I am *very* mortal. Good-by, petite!"

He laid his hand on her shoulder with the familiar kindness he had imperceptibly grown into with her, natural to his earlier nature, but very exceptional with his present one; he could hardly look into the clear brilliance of her dark-blue eyes and doubt her—doubt, at least, that she now meant what she said, whether or no she would keep to it.

In another second he was across his horse's back, and riding out of the court-yard with Curly, while Alma stood in the doorway looking after him, shading her eyes from the May sun, which touched up her golden hair and her picturesque bright-hued dress into a brilliant tableau, under the low, dark, brown porch of her cottage home.

Curly rode on quietly for some little way, busying his mind with rolling the leaves round a *Manilla*, and lighting

it en route, while De Vigne puffed away at a giant Havana, between regulating which and keeping his fidgety Grey Derby quiet, (he usually rode horses that would have thrown any other man but him or M. Rarey,) he had little leisure for road-side conversation.

At last Curly broke silence, twisting his long blonde moustaches with a puzzled smile, and flicking his mare's ears thoughtfully with his whip.

"Well, De Vigne! I don't know what to make of it!"

"Don't know what to make of what?" demanded De Vigne, curtly.

He was a little impatient with his Frestonhills pet. One may not care two straws for pheasant-shooting—nay, one may even have sprained one's arm, so that it is a physical impossibility to lift an Enfield to one's shoulder—and yet so dog-in-mangerish is human nature that one could kick a fellow who ventures to come in and touch a head of our défendu or uncared-for game.

"Of that little thing," returned Curly, musingly. "I don't understand her."

"Very possibly."

"Why very possibly? I know a good deal of women, good, bad, and indifferent, but I'll be hanged if I can understand that Little Tressillian. She's so different, somehow, to all the rest of 'em. She has so much sense in her, and yet she is full of life and nonsense. She can touch on all sorts of queer subjects, and speak about a man's life without a trace of boldness. She is so frank and free one *might* take no end of advantage of her; and yet, somehow, deuce take it, one *can't*. The girl's truth and fearlessness are more protection to her than other women's pruderies and chevaux-de-frise."

De Vigne did not answer, but smoked his Havana *silently*; probably because he thought with Curly, but was *not* going to say so.

"She is a little darling," resumed Curly, meditatively. "That's the sort of girl I've dreamed about, De Vigne. One feels a better fellow with her—eh?"

"Can't say," replied De Vigne. "I have generally looked on young ladies, for inflammable boys like you, as dangerous stimulants rather than as calming tonics."

"Confound your matter-of-fact," swore Curly. "You may laugh at it if you like, but I mean it. She makes me think of things that one pooh-poohs and forgets in the bustle of the world. She's a vast lot too good to be shut up in that brown old house, with only a kitten to play with, and an old nurse to take care of her."

"She seems to have made an impression on you!" said De Vigne, dryly.

"Certainly she has!" said Curly, gayly. "And, 'pon my life, what makes still more impression on me, De Vigne, is, that you and I, two as wild fellows as ever lived, and pretty well as unscrupulous in that line, I should say, as that much-abused chap, Don Juan, should be going calling on that little thing, and chatting with her as harmlessly as if she were our sister, when we *ought* to be making desperate love to her, if she hadn't such confounded dear trusting eyes of hers that they make one ashamed of one's own thoughts. 'Pon my life, it's very extraordinary!"

"If extraordinary, it is only a man's honor," said De Vigne, with his coldest hauteur, "toward a young, guileless girl, utterly unprotected, save by her own defenselessness—the best protection to any right-feeling man. For my own part, as a 'married man,' (how cold his sneer always grew at those words!) I have no right to 'enter the lists' with you, as you poetically phrased it to-day, even supposing my experiences of passion did not make me, as they do, renounce all such affairs, with no merit in the renunciation; and for yourself, you are too true a gentle-

man, Curly, though it is 'our way' to be unscrupulous in such matters, to take unfair advantage of my introduction of you to a girl who is a lady, and deserves to be treated as such, though she has not the entourages of wealth and position to command respect; and, indeed, if you did, I, to whom Mr. Tressillian appealed for what slight assistance I have it in my power to afford her, should hold myself responsible for having made you known to her, and should be bound to take the insult as to myself."

Curly, at the beginning of De Vigne's very calm, but very grandiose speech, opened his lazy violet eyes, and stared at him; but as he went on, all Curly's warmer feelings, and all the native delicacy and generosity that lay at the heart of this young "Adonis of the Guards," too deep for his life to score them out, roused up, and he turned to his old Frestonhills hero with his smile, so *young* in its brightness:

"Quite right, De Vigne. You are a brick; and if I do any harm to that dear Little Tressillian, I give you free leave to shoot me dead like a dog, and should richly deserve it, too. But go and see her I must, for she is worth all the women we shall meet at Jerry's to-day, though they *do* count themselves the *crème de la crème*."

"The *crème de la crème* can be, at the best, only skim," said De Vigne, with his ready fling of sarcasm; "but I am not going to the Maberlys', thank you. Early strawberries and late on dits are both flavorless to my taste; the fault of my own palate, perhaps. I shall go and lunch at the U. S., and play a game or two at pool. How much better I should like billiards, if one could *progress*; but after the first year or two a man has reached his perfection in it, and then he stands still till his eyes and arms fail him. How pleasant the wind is! Grey Derby wants a gallop, let's give him his way."

Palamon and Arcite were not truer or warmer friends than De Vigne and Curly; but, when a woman's face dazzled the eyes of both, the death-blow was struck to friendship, and the seeds of feud were sown.

PART THE THIRTEENTH.

I.

HOW VIVIAN SABRETASCHE BURIED HIS PAST AND AWOKE TO A GOLDEN PRESENT.

ON the 12th of May Leila Countess of Puffdoff gave a ball, concert, and sort of moonlight fête, all three in one, at her charming dower-house at Twickenham. All our set went pretty nearly, and all the men of Ours, of course, for le feu Puffdoff had been in the Dashers, and out of a tender memory of him, his young widow made enfans de la maison of all the corps; not, one is sure, because Ours was one of the crackest troops in the service, and we were counted the handsomest set of men in all Arms, but out of pure love and respect for our late gouty colonel, who, Georges Dandin in life, became a Mausolus when under the sod. Who upholds that the good is oft interred with our bones? Ce n'est pas vrai, though it *is* Shakspeare who says it; if you leave your family, or your pet hospital a good many thousands, you will get the cardinal virtues, and a trifle more, in letters of gold on your tomb; if you have lived up to your income, or forgotten to insure, any penny-alining La Monnoye will do to scribble your epitaph, and break off with "*C'est trop mentir pour cinq écus!*" Le feu Puffdoff became "*mon mari adoré*" as soon as the

grave closed over him; poor cause—"mon mari adoré" had left his handsome countess most admirably well off, and with some of this "last bequest" the little widow gave us a charming fête on this 12th of May. Such things are all so much alike, that, going to one, you ordinarily have gone to all, but this was certainly better than most. The Puffdoff wines were par excellence; the Puffdoff taste admirable; Grisi and Mario, and a number of lesser stars sang à ravir; Violet Molyneux and a number of lesser belles waltzed to perfection; there were as lovely women and as exquisite toilettes as you could wish to see; and there were the fairy-like grounds glistening in the moonlight, with myriad lamps gleaming like diamond clusters among the darkness, and the winter-garden, where, under glass, nature in the tropics was counterfeited so inimitably with fragrant imitations of the rose gardens of the East, the orange groves of southern Europe, and the luxuriant vegetation of the West Indies.

It looked like fairyland, I admit, with its brilliant coloring, its heavy perfumes, its beautiful music. Not Anacreon or Aristippus, Boccaccio or Moore, need have imagined anything more charming to look at—it was only a pity that the people were not Arcadians to enjoy it; that there were such plots and counterplots and fermentations under that smooth surface; such heart-burnings, jealousies, and manœuvres among those soft smiling beauties; such undercurrents of bitterness and ill-nature under the pleasant sunny ripples of social life. What a sad trick one catches of looking *under* everything; it spoils pleasure, for nothing will stand it; but when once one has been sick through chromate of lead, one can't believe in Bath-buns, try how one may! I went to the ball late; De Vigne, much to the Puffdoff's chagrin, chose instead to go to a card party at

Wyndham's, where play was certain to be high. He preferred men's society to women's at all times, and I must say I think he showed his judgment! The first person I saw was Violet, on Curly's arm, with whom she had been waltzing. Brilliant and lovely she looked, with all her high-bred grace and finish about her; but she had lost her color, there was an absence of all that free spontaneous gayety, and there was a certain *distraction* in her eyes, which made me guess the Colonel's abrupt departure had not been without its effect upon our most radiant beauty. She had promised me the sixth dance the previous day in the Park, and, as I waltzed with her, pour m'amuser I mentioned Sabretasche's name casually, when, despite all her sang-froid, a slight flush in her cheeks showed she did not hear it with indifference. When I resigned her to Regalia, (Violet danced as untiringly as a Willis, and the little Duke's one accomplishment was his waltzing,) I strolled through the rooms with the other beauté régissante of the night, Madame la Duchesse de Vieillecour. Good Heavens! what relationship was there between that stately, haughty-eyed woman, with her Court atmosphere about her, her calm but finished coquetteries, and bright-faced, blithe-voiced Gwen Brandling, who had given me that ring under the trees in Kensington Gardens ten years before? Ah, well! Time changes us all. The ring was old-fashioned now; and Madame and I *made love* more amusingly and more wisely, if less truly than earnestly, than in those old silly days when we were *in love*, before I had learned experience and she had taken up prudence and duquel quarterings. I was sitting under one of the luxuriant festoons of creepers in the winter-garden with her excellency; revenging, perhaps a little more naturally than rightly, on Madame de Vieillecour the desertion of Gwen Brandling, (you see, I had loved and lost the latter; I didn't care two straws

for the former;) and I suppose I was getting a trifle too sarcastic in the memories I was recalling to her, for she broke off our conversation suddenly, and not with that subtle tact which Tuileries air had taught her.

"Look! Is it possible? Is not that Colonel Sabretasche? I thought he was gone to Biarritz for his health."

I looked; it *was* Sabretasche, to my supreme astonishment, for his leave had not nearly expired; and in a letter De Vigne had had from him a day or two previous there had been no mention of his intending to return.

"How charming he is, your Colonel!" said Madame de Vieillecour, languidly. "I never met anybody handsomer or more witty in all Paris. Bring him here, I want to speak to him."

"Surprised to see me, Arthur?" said Sabretasche, laughing, as I went up to him, obedient to her desires. "I always told you never to be astonished at anything I do. I am as enigmatical, you know, and as erratic as the Wandering Jew, or the Premier Grenadier du Monde. Madame de Vieillecour there? She does me much honor. Is she trying to make you singe your wings again?"

He came up to her with me, of course, and stood chatting some minutes.

"I am only this moment arrived," he said, in answer to her. "When I reached Park Lane this morning, or rather evening, I found Lady Puffdoff's card of invitation; so I dined, dressed, and came off, for I knew I should meet all my old friends here. Yes, I am much better, thank you; the sweet air of the Pyrenees must always do one good, and then they give all the credit to the Biarritz baths! Shockingly unjust, but what *is* just in this world? How odd Biarritz looked, by-the-way, with not a fair face or a dyspeptic constitution in it!"

He stayed chatting some moments, though I noticed his

eyes glanced impatiently through the rooms in search of somebody or other he did not see. The air of the Pyrenees had indeed done him good; he did not look like the same man; his listless melancholy, which had grown on him so much during the last month, had entirely worn off; there was a clear mind-at-ease look about him, as if he were relieved of some weight that had worn him down, and there was a true ring about his voice and laugh which had not been there, gay as he was accounted, since I had known him, even when he was ten years younger than he was now. He soon left Madame de Vieillecour, and lounged through the rooms, exchanging a smile, or a bow, or a few words with almost every one he met, for Sabretasche had a most illimitable acquaintance, and all were delighted to see him back; for, without him, things in his set ever seemed at a stand-still.

Violet Molyneux was sitting down after her waltz with Regalia, leaning back on a couch, fanning herself slowly, and attending very little to the crowd of men who had gathered, as they were certain to do, round the beauty of the season. She generally laughed, and talked, and jested with them all, so that her pet friends called her a shocking flirt, (though she was in reality no more of one than any fascinating woman appears, *volens volens*, and was far too difficult to please to be a coquette;) but to-night she was listless and silent, playing absently with her bouquet, though admiring glances enough were bent upon her, and delicate flattery enough breathed in her ears, to have roused the Sleeping Beauty herself from her trance.

It required more, however, to rouse Violet to-night; that little more she had, in a very soft and musical voice, a voice well accustomed to give meaning to such words, that whispered,—

"How can I hope I have been remembered, when you have so many to teach you to forget?"

She looked up; her violet eyes beamed with such undisguised delight that some of the men smiled, and others swore under their moustaches; her natural wild-rose color came back into her cheeks; in a second she was her own radiant animated self; she gave him her hand without a word, and one of her vassals, a young Viscount, a boy in the Rifles, gave up his place beside her to Sabretasche. Then she talked to him, quietly enough, on indifferent subjects, of Biarritz and Pau, of the Garonne and the Pic-du-Midi, of Bigorre and Gavarnie, as if neither remembered their last strange interview in the Water-Color Exhibition, as if the Francesca were not in both their minds, as if love were not lying at the heart and gleaming in the eyes of each of them.

Sabretasche asked her to waltz; she could not, since she had only the minute before refused Regalia; but she took his arm and strolled into the summer-garden, leaving the full rise and swell of the ball-room music, with the subdued hum and murmur of Society, in the distance.

He spoke of trifles as they passed the different groups that were laughing, chatting, or flirting in the several rooms; but his eyes were on hers, and spoke a more eloquent language. Violet never asked him of his sudden return or his abrupt departure. She was too happy to be with him again to care through what right or reason she was so. Gradually they grew silent, such a silence as is often more expressive than speech, as they strolled on through the conservatories till they stood alone among the rich tropical and southern vegetation. One side of the winter-garden was open to the clear and still May night, where the midnight stars shone on the dark old trees and the white statues, with their lamps gleaming, diamond-like,

between, while the early nightingales sang to the fair spring skies those passionate chants of love and rapture, where-
 • with the other tribes of nature, whom we in our arrogance dare to call the *lower*, touch deep to the heart of man, respond to all his feverish dreams and all his vague desires, and give utterance in their unknown tongue to those diviner thoughts, that yearning sadness, which lie far down unseen in Human nature.

The night was still; there was no sound save the cadence of the distant music and the sweet gush of the nightingales' songs close by; the wind of early summer swept gently in and fanned their heavy perfumes from the glowing leaves of tree and flower, till the air was full of that dreamy and voluptuous beauty of fragrance which lulls the senses and woos the heart to those softer moments which, could they but last, would make men never need to dream of heaven. Such hours are rare; what wonder if to win them we risk all, if in them we cry, with the Lotus Eaters,

Let us alone. What is it that will last?
 All things are taken from us and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
 All things have rest and ripen toward the grave
 In silence; ripen, fall, and cease.
 Give us long rest, or death; dark death or dreamful ease.

The soft moonlit air trembled with the low sighing of the trees and the swell of the nightingale's note,

———breaking its heart with its strain,
 Waiting breathless to die when its music is ended.

The rich radiance within gleamed on the crimson glow of the gorgeous roses and the silvery white of the magnolias

and lilies; the musical fountains fell into their marble basins with harmonious cadence; Sabretasche, in the still beauty of the night, could listen to every breath and hear each heart-throb of the woman he loved, as he looked into her face with all its delicate and impassioned beauty—the beauty of the Francesca. All the passion that was in him stirred and trembled at it; the voluptuous sweetness of the hour chimed delicious music with his thoughts and senses; he bent over her with all the fondness and tenderness she had awakened:

“Violet!”

It was only one word he spoke, but in it all was uttered to them both.

She lifted her eyes to his; he put his arms round her and drew her to his heart, pressing his lips on hers in kisses long and passionate as those that doomed Francesca. And the stars shone softly, and the flowers bowed their lovely heads, and the nightingales sang joyously under the sweet May skies, while two passionate human hearts met and were at rest.

“Violet, my love, my dearest, you are mine!” murmured Sabretasche, fondly leaning over her with the gentle and earnest tenderness that lay in the character of this so-disant gay and heartless flirt.

“Yours for life and death—yours forever!” answered Violet, looking up into his eyes, then drooping her head upon his shoulder, with a blush raised by the fervid gaze she met.

“God bless you!” He was too deeply moved to find his usual eloquence. It was eloquence enough between them to be there heart to heart, with the love pent up of late in both expressed in that fond and silent communion.

“Darling,” whispered Sabretasche, after many minutes had passed away, “you give me your love, though I seemed

so long to reject it! You can never guess all that I have suffered, all my temptations, all my struggles. I have much to tell you—you alone; but not to-night. I can think of nothing but my own happiness; it is so long since I have been happy! Twenty years! longer than your life, Violet!”

“And I can make you happy?”

“Yes!” He said it with a sigh of delight, as of a man who throws off his heart a heavy burden carried through lengthened years. “Happy as I never hoped—as, since my boyish days, I never dreamed—as certainly my life has never merited! My love has been a curse to many women, Violet; it shall never be so to you. But I do not deserve to have a woman’s heart all that yours is to me—all that you make it to me, with your noble trust, your frank affection, your high intelligence, your generous soul. I have loved many before you; I shall never love others after you. You have roused all the passions of my youth, all the tenderness of my manhood. To make your peace I would lay down my life to-night, and without you that life would be a curse insupportable. My own love, my last love! what words can tell you all you are to me? If passion had no other utterance than speech, it would remain unspoken!”

He rested his lips on her brow, his heart throbbing loud against hers. They stayed long in their delicious solitude, while the stars grew clearer in the May midnight, and the nightingale’s song sweeter, and the scent of the flowers mingled with the fountain’s silvery play; and Violet Molyneux learned all the depths of tenderness, gentleness, and affection yearning for response, which lay hid from the world’s eye, as silver lies deep in the core of the earth, in the heart of this man, whom society counted as a *roné* without conscience, of perfect taste and utter heartless-

ness, as fatal to her sex as he was charming to them, a *lion* who could be touched by nothing, an *âme damnée* only to be countenanced because he was rich, courted, and the fashion!

When they went back into the ball-room the waltz had its charm, the music its melody, the flowers their fragrance again, for Violet; for a touch of the hand, a glance of the eye was sufficient eloquence between them, and his whispered good night, as he led her to her carriage, was dearer to her than any flattery poet or prince had ever breathed; nay, she was so happy that she even smiled brightly on Regalia, to her mother's joy—so happy, that when she reached the solitude of her own chamber, she threw herself on her knees in her glittering gossamer ball-dress, and thanked God for the new joy of her life with as unchecked and impetuous tears of rapture as if she had been Little Alma in her cottage home rather than the beauty of the season, with coronets at her feet.

Lord Molyneux was a poor Irish peer; Sabretasche was rich, of high family, *bien reçu* in the most exclusive circles, a man whose word was law, whose pre-eminence in fashion and ton was acknowledged, whose admiration was honor, and at whose offer of marriage, if he had condescended to make any, no parent in all town, though the Colonel *was* a commoner, would have failed to feel ecstatically delighted *au fond de son cœur*. His social position was so good, his settlements would be so unexceptionable, why! even our dear saint, the Bishop of Comet-Hock, though he shook his head over Sabretasche's sins, and expressed his opinion with considerable certainty concerning the warmth of his ultimate reception—you know where—would have handed him over, with the greatest eagerness, either of his pretty, extravagant daughters, had the Colonel deigned to ask for one of them. Therefore, when Sabretasche called on him

the morning after Leila Puffdoff's ball, and made formal proposals for Violet, Jockey Jack, though considerably astonished—as society had settled that Sabretasche would never marry as decidedly as it had settled that he was Mephistopheles in fascinating guise—was excessively pleased, assented readily, and had but one drawback on his mind—*telling his wife*—that lady having set her affections on things above, namely, little Regalia's balls and strawberry-leaves. However, Lady Molyneux's chief aim was to marry her daughter somehow as early as possible, so as not to have two milliners' bills to pay and so attractive a face always out with her, and she assented languidly, not by any means particularly pleased, but having no earthly grounds on which to object to such a man and such an offer. So Sabretasche was received into the Molyneux family, and made himself welcome there, as he always could everywhere when he took the trouble, with his indolent grace, his patrician pride, and his calm courtesy, which somehow compelled extremest courtesy in return.

When he came out of Jockey Jack's study that morning, he naturally took his way to Violet's boudoir, where his young love sat, a book it is true in her lap, but her lips parted, and her eyes resting on his statuette of her greyhound, in a sweet dream of "yesterday." She sprang up as he entered, with such delight in her face, so fond a smile, and so bright a blush, that Sabretasche thought he had never seen anything of half so much beauty, sated as he had been with beauty all his days.

"How lovely you are, Violet!" he said, involuntarily, some minutes after, as he sat beside her on the couch, passing his hand over the soft perfumed hair that rested against his arm.

"Oh, do not you tell me that. So many do!" cried Violet. "I like *you* to see in me what no one else sees."

"I see a great deal in you that no one else sees; whole tableaux of heart and mind, that no one else can have a glance at," said Sabretasche, smiling. "But I am proud of your beauty, my lovely Francesca, for all that; though it may be a fact patent to all eyes."

"Then I am glad I have it," said Violet, naïvely. "I love you to be proud of anything in me you know. I would be a thousand times worthier of you if I could."

"The difficulty 'to be worthy' is not on your side," said he, with a shade of his old sadness. "I cannot bear to think that a life so pure as yours should be dedicated to a life so impure as mine. How spotless is your past, Violet—how dark is mine!"

"But how few have been my temptations—how many yours!" interrupted Violet. "A woman—especially an unmarried one—is so fenced in and guarded by society and her home, that her virtue is little merit. What heavy punishment would fall on her if she departed from it! But with men it is so different; from the moment they are launched into the world temptations and incentives assail them on every side, and meet them at every turn. All things combine to lure them into pleasure, and they are no gods to resist the nature with which they are created. Society, custom, their companions, their literature, their amusements—all are so many Circe's wiles; and when they yield to them, they know society will grant them impunity. Everything tempts them; and if they are tempted, they only yield to the bias with which they were born, being mortal men and not marble statues. The world loves condemning. It would do well I think to remember the baits it itself throws out—baits to which all men, sooner or later, more or less, openly or *sub rosa*, yield. If you have anything to tell me, tell it fearlessly. I shall not love you the less, through whatever fires you may have passed. A

woman's office is to console, not to censure; and if a man has trust in her enough to reveal any of his past sins or sorrows to her, her pleasure should be to teach him to forsake them and forget them in a fresher, fairer, happier existence."

"My precious Violet! God bless you for your noble love! If my care and tenderness can ever repay it, your future shall reward you," whispered Sabretasche, with a deep sigh of rest, in the full and complete happiness he had at last attained. "What I have chiefly to tell you is of wrongs done to me—wrongs that have sealed my lips to you till now—wrongs that have weighed on me for twenty long years, and made me the enigmatical and wayward man I probably have seemed. It is a long story, darling, but one I would rather you should know before you fully give yourself to me."

She looked up at him with a fond smile, a silent promise that in heart she *was* already given to him; and leaning against him, with his arm round her, and her hand in his, Violet listened to the story—that every different scandal-monger had guessed at, and each separate coterie tried, and vainly tried, to probe—the story of the Colonel's early life.

II.

THE SKELETON THAT SOCIETY HAD NEVER SEEN.

"You know," began Sabretasche, "that I was born and educated in Italy, and indulged in all things by my father, (who loved me tenderly for the sake of my young mother, whom he had idolized, and who had died when I was six years old,) and, accustomed to every luxury, I grew up with much of the softness, voluptuousness, and fervent

short-lived passion of the Italian character, while at fifteen I knew life as many a man of five-and-twenty, brought up in seclusion and puritanism here, does not. But though I was an officer in the Neapolitan service, and first in pleasure and levity among the young Italian noblesse, I was still impressionable and romantic, with too much of the poetry and imagination of the country in me to be blasé, though I might be inconstant. I never recall the memory of my youth, *up to twenty*, without regret—it was so full of enjoyment, of soft dreams, sweet as an idyl from my rich imagination, of delicious pleasures, which had all the charm of freshness, all the gusto of youth, changing each day with the brilliance and rapidity of kaleidoscopic pictures, one chased away by another, none leaving a shadow behind! In the summer of my one-and-twentieth year I left Naples, during the hot season, to stay with a friend of mine, whose estates lay in Tuscany. You were in Tuscany last year. How fair the country is under the shadow of the Apennines, with its brown olive woods and its glorious sunsets! It is strange how the curse of its ingratitude to its noblest sons still clings to it, so favored by nature as it is! Della Torre's place was some six or seven miles from Sienna. I had gone up to Florence previously with my father, whose oldest friend was the then consul there; and traveling across Tuscany when malaria was then rife, a low fever attacked me. I was traveling vetturino—there were no railways there in those days—and my servant, finding that I was much too ill to go on, stopped of his own accord at a village not very far from Cachiano. The single act of a servant, who would have died to serve either me or my father—poor fellow, he was shot down the other day among hundreds of insurgents by Bomba—grew into the curse of my life. The name of the village was Montepulito. I dare say you passed through

it; it is beautifully placed, its few scattered houses, with their high peaked roofs, standing among the great groves of chestnuts and the gray thickets of olives, with sunny vineyards and tangled brushwoods of genista and myrtle lying in the glowing Tuscan sunlight. There Anzoletto stopped of his own accord. I was too ill to dissent; and as the carriage pulled up before the single wretched little inn the place afforded, the priest of the village, who was passing, offered me the use of his own house. I had hardly power to accept or refuse, but Anzoletto seized on the offer eagerly; I believe he would have thought a Crown prince honored by giving house-room to his young milor, and I was conveyed to the priest's house, where, for nine or ten days, I knew nothing, or next to nothing, of what passed, except that I suffered and dreamt. When I awoke from a deep sleep one evening into consciousness, I saw the red sunset streaming through the purple vine around my lattice, Anzoletto asleep by my bedside, and a woman of great beauty watching me: of great beauty, Violet, but not your beauty either. It seemed to me then the face of an angel: afterward, God forgive her! I knew it as the face of a fiend. She was Sylvia da Castrone, the niece, some said the daughter, of the priest of Montepulito. She was then three-and-twenty—when men love women their own age, or older, no good can come of it—and very beautiful: a Tuscan beauty, with a delicate Roman profile, blonde hair, and, what is rare for an Italian, a very fair, white skin, and long, large, dark eyes; a lovely woman, in fact, with perfect contour, and a certain languid grace that charmed one like music. She had, too, a certain aristocracy of air. The priest himself was of noble though decayed family; a sleek, silent, suave man, discontented with his humble position in Montepulito, but meek and lowly-minded, according to his own telling, as a religieuz

could be. I awoke to see Sylvia da Castrone by my bedside, I recovered to have her constantly beside me, to gaze on her dangerous charms in the equally dangerous lassitude of convalescence. There is a certain languid pleasure in recovery from illness when one is young that makes all things seem *couleur de rose*; to me, with my impressionable senses and my Southern temperament, there was something in this seclusion amidst all that is softest and fairest in nature, shared with one as beautiful as the scenes among which I found her, which appealed irresistibly at once to poetry and passion, then the two most dominant elements in my character, in my dreams, and in my desires, with which no ambitions greater than those of pleasure, and no pains harsher than those of love, had at that time mingled. Sufficient to say, I began to love Sylvia the first day her fair face bent over my couch; as I recovered with renovated strength, my love grew, till sense, prudence, keen-sightedness, all that might have restrained me, were submerged in it. I loved her fondly, tenderly, honorably, as ever man could love woman. I decked her in all the brilliant hues of a poet's fancy, I thought her the realization of all my sweetest ideals, I believed I loved for all eternity. I never stopped to learn her nature, her character, her thoughts; I never paused to learn if she in any way accorded to all my requirements and ideas; I loved her—I *married her!* Heavens, what that madness has cost me!"

The memory came over him with a deadly shudder; at its recollection the fell shade it had so long cast on him returned again, and he pressed Violet convulsively to his heart, as if with her warm, young love to crush out the burden of that cold and cruel dead one. Violet was very pale; the intelligence of his marriage cast a death-like chill over her—the first gloom her bright life and high

spirits had ever known; but even in that her first impulse was to console him. She lifted her head and kissed him, the first caress she had ever offered him, as if to show, more tenderly than words could give them, her sympathy and her affection. As silently and as fondly Sabretasche thanked her for the delicacy and comprehension which were so grateful to him, and with an effort he resumed his story.

"We were married—by the priest Castrone, and for a few weeks Montepulto was heaven to me, and I believed my fondest and fairest dreams were realized. Violet, my darling, do not let my story pain you. All men have many early loves before they reach that fuller and stronger one which is the crown of their existence. I was happy, then, when I was a boy, and when you were not born, my Violet!—but you will give me still greater happiness, as passionate, and more perfect. We were married; and for a week or two the surrender of my liberty seemed trifling pay indeed for the rapture it had brought me. The first shock back to actual life was a letter from my father. I dared not tell him of my hasty step; not from any anger that I should have met, but from the grief it would have caused him, for the only thing he had ever interdicted to me was an early or an unequal marriage. Fortunately, the letter was only to ask me to go to England on some business for him. I went, of course, taking Sylvia with me; and while in London, at her suggestion, (it did not occur to me, or I should have made it,) we had the ceremony again performed in a Protestant church, the rectory-church at Marylebone. She said it pleased her to be united to me by the religion of my country as well as of her own. I loved her, and believed her, and was only too happy to make still faster, if I could, the church fetters which bound me to a woman I idolized! We were a month or two in England.

I took her into Wales and to the Lakes; then we returned to Italy, and I bought for her a pretty little villa just outside Naples, where every spare moment that I had formerly given to dissipation or amusement, or idle dreaming by the sea-shore, I now gave to my wife. Oh, my darling! that any should have borne that title before you! Gradually now dawned on me the truth which she had carefully concealed during our earlier intercourse; that, graceful, gentle, perfect lady as she was in seeming, her temper was the temper of a devil, her passions such as would have disgraced the vilest woman in a street-brawl. Can you not fancy, Violet, what it was to me, with my taste, as it always has been over-sensitive and refined, accustomed at home to have ever the gentlest tones and the softest voices, abhorring an approach to what was harsh, or vulgar, or unharmonious, to hear the woman I worshiped meet me, if I was a moment later than she expected, or the presents I brought her a trifle less costly than she had anticipated—meet me with a torrent of reproaches and invectives, to see her beautiful features distorted with fury, her soft eyes lurid with flame, her coral lips quivering with deadly venom, railing alike at her dogs, her servants, and her husband!—a fury—a she-devil! Good Heavens! what fiercer torment can there be for man, than to be linked for life with a vixen, a virago? None can tell how it wears all the beauty of his life away; how, surely, like the dropping of water on a stone, it eats away his peace; how it lowers him, how it degrades him in his own eyes, how it drags him down to her own level, until it is a miracle if it do not rouse in him her own coarse and humiliating passions! Looking back on those daily scenes of disgrace and misery, which grew, as week and month rolled by, each time worse and worse, when my words ceased to have the slightest weight, I wonder how I endured them as I did; yet what is more incredible still, I

yet loved her, loved her despite the hideous deformity of her fiendish nature; for a virago *is* a fiend, and of the deadliest sort. Still, though my life grew a very agony to me, and the weight of my secret from my father grew unbearable—I dared not tell him, he was in such delicate health the shock might have been fatal—I was never neglectful of her. Strange as it seems, little as the world would believe it, I was most constant to, and most patient with her. I have done little good in my life, God knows; but in my duty as a husband to her, boy as I was, I may truly say I never failed. Not quite twelve months after our marriage, Sylvia gave birth to a daughter. I was very sorry. I am not domestic—never shall be—and a child was the last inconvenience and annoyance I should have wished added to the ménage. I hoped, however, that it might soften her temper. It did not; and my life became literally a curse to me.

“At this time Sylvia’s brother came to Naples, a showy, handsome, vulgar young man, with none of her exterior delicacy and aristocracy, who had been my detestation in Montepulito; for anything that shocked my refinement was always, as you are aware, to my fastidious senses, unbearable and intolerable. Naturally he came to his sister’s house, though he had no liking for me, and I believe our antipathy was mutual; but he quartered himself on his sister, for he was poor, and had nothing to do, and I generally found him there when I went to her villa, which was as often as I was free from military duties, or from my father’s house, and could get away without observation from my brother officers and the gay whirl of Neapolitan society, where I was a *lion* and a pet. Almost invariably, when I went there after Guiseppe da Castrone’s arrival, I found him and some of his friends—rollicking, do-nothing, vulgar mauvais sujets, like himself—smoking and drinking

there; while Sylvia, decked with her old smiles, and adorned in the rich dress it had been my delight to bestow on her, lay on her soft couch. She had all the languor and indolence of a Southern, flirting her fan or touching her guitar; her lovely voice had been one of her greatest charms for me, but, once married, she never took the trouble to let me hear it. The men were odious to me, accustomed as I was to the best society of the old Italian noblesse, and born with only too sensitive a disgust for a common tone and *mauvais ton*, but I was so sick and heart-weary of the constant contentions and storms that awaited me in my wife's home, that I was glad of the presence of other persons to prevent the *tête-à-tête*, which was certain to be a scene of passion and abuse, and to restore the smiles to the face which for me now only wore a frown or a sneer. The chief visitor at Sylvia's house was a friend of her brother's—an artist of the name of Lani—a young fellow of five or six-and-twenty, who considered himself an *Adonis*, I believe, for he was exceedingly handsome, in a coarse, full-colored style, though utterly detestable in my ideas, with his loud voice, his vulgar fopism, and his would-be wit. He pleased Sylvia, however; a fact to which I never attached any importance, for I was not at all of a suspicious or skeptical nature then, and I am never one of those who think that a woman must necessarily be faithless to her husband because she likes the society of another man; on the contrary, a husband's hold on her affection must be very slight, if, to keep it, he must subject her to a seclusion almost conventual. Fidelity is no fidelity unless it has opportunity to swerve if it choose. So, though I received the furies, he the smiles, to be jealous of Lani never occurred to me. I, haughty, refined, courted Vivian Sabretasche, to condescend to jealousy of this vulgar, presumptuous, coarse-minded young fellow!—I could never have stooped

to it, had it even occurred to me, which it never did, for I held my own honor infinitely too high to dream that another could sully it. My trust and my security were rudely destroyed! Six months more went on. Sylvia clamored ceaselessly for the acknowledgment of our marriage; in vain I pleaded to her that my father was on his death-bed, that the physicians told me that the slightest mental shock would end his existence, and that as soon as ever I had lost him, which must be at farthest in a few months' time, I would acknowledge her as my wife, and take her to England, where large property had just been left me. Such a plea would, you would think, have been enough for any woman's heart. It availed nothing with her; she made it the occasion for such awful storms of execration and passion as I pray Heaven I may never see in woman or man again. I refused to endanger my father's life to please her caprices. The result was a scene so degrading to her, so full of shame and misery to me, that for several days I could not bring myself to enter her presence again. My love was gone, trampled under her coarse and cruel invectives. In the place of my lovely and idolized wife I found a fiend, and I repented too late the irrevocable folly and the iron fetters of an early marriage, the curse of so many men. When at last I went to the house of my wife, which *should* have been my home, and *was* my hell, the windows of some of the rooms which looked on to a veranda stood open; I walked up the gardens and through those windows into the rooms unannounced, as a man in his own house thinks he is at liberty to do. How one remembers trifles on such days of anguish as that was to me! I remember the play of the sunshine on the ilex-leaves, I remember how I brushed the boughs of the magnolias out of my path as I went up the veranda steps. Unseen myself, I saw Lani and my wife; his arms were round her, her head upon his

breast, and I caught words which, though insufficient for law, told me of her infidelity. God help me! what I suffered! Young, unsuspecting, acutely sensitive, painfully alive to the slightest stain upon my honor, to be deplaced by this vulgar, low-bred rival! Great Heavens! how bitter was my shame!"

Violet's hands clinched on his in a passion of sympathy for him and horror at his wrongs:

"Oh, Vivian, my dearest! how I grieve for you! how I hate her! Would to Heaven I could avenge it on her!"

"Death *has* avenged me, my darling!" said Sabretasche, gravely, gently soothing the vehement emotion his story had roused in Violet's warm and impassioned nature before he resumed his narrative. "Those few words that fell on my ear in the first paralyzed moment of dim horror at the treachery which had availed itself of my unsuspecting hospitality to rob me of my honor, were sufficient for me. Even then I had memory enough to keep myself from stooping to the degradation of a spy, and from lowering myself before the man who had betrayed me. I went farther into the room, and they saw me. Lani had the grace to look guilty and ashamed; for only the day before he had asked me to lend him money, and I had complied, he knowing all the while what reward he was giving me. I remember being perfectly calm and self-possessed; one often is in hours of the greatest suffering or excitement. I motioned him to the door: he slunk out like a hound afraid of a double thonging. The fellow had neither conscience, spirit, nor courage; he was a coward, and craven-hearted as those under-bred men often are at heart. He went out, and I was left alone with Sylvia—with my wife. Do you wonder that for nineteen years I have loathed and abhorred that title, holding it as a synonym with all that is base, and treacherous, and shameful—a curse from which

there is no escape—a clog, rather than take which into his life a man had better forego all love, all pleasure, all passion—a mess of porridge with poison in the cup, for which he must give up all the priceless birthright of liberty and peace, never enjoyed and never valued till they are lost forever, past recall?

“Do you think there was any shame, remorse, repentance on her face, any regret for the abuse of all my confidence, any sorrow for the true affection she had outraged, any consciousness of the fidelity thus repaid, of the trust thus returned? No; in her face there was only a devilish laugh. She met me with a sneer and a scoff; she had the brazen falseness to deny her infidelity, for she knew that admission would divorce her and give me freedom; and when I taxed her with it, she only answered with invectives, with violence, insult, and opprobrium. It ever seemed as if a devil entered into her when she became possessed with that fearful and fiend-like passion. I will not sully your ears with all the disgraceful details of the scene where a woman, at once a virago and a liar, gave reins to her fell passions, and forgot sex, truth, all things, even common decency of language or of conduct; suffice it, it ended in worse violence still. As I rose, to leave her forever, and end the last of these horrible interviews, which destroyed all my self-respect and withered all my youth, she sprang upon me like a tigress, and struck at my breast with a stiletto, which lay on a table near, among other things of curious workmanship. Strong as I was at that time, I could scarcely master her—a furious woman is more savage in her wrath than any beast of prey; she clung to me, yelling hideous words, and striking blindly at me with her dagger. Fortunately for me, the stiletto was old and blunt, and could not penetrate through the cloth of my coat. By sheer force I wrenched myself from her grasp, seized her wrists, unclined her fingers from

the handle of the dagger, and left her prostrate, from the violence of her own passions, her beautiful hair unloosened in the struggle, her hands cut and tore in her own wild fencing with the stiletto, her eyes glaring with the ferocity of a tigress, her coral lips covered with foam. From that hour I never saw her face. Last week I read the tidings of her death."

Sabretasche paused. He had not recalled the dread memory of his marriage without bitter pain; never till now had his lips breathed one word of his story to a living creature, and he could not lift the veil from the secret buried for eighteen years without some of the murderous air from the tomb poisoning the freer, purer atmosphere he now breathed. It had a strangely strong effect on Violet. All the color fled from her lips and cheeks; she burst into convulsive sobs, and trembling painfully, shrank closer into the Colonel's arms, as if the dead wife could come and claim him from her, his new young love, idolized so tenderly, wooed so fondly, with so bright and cloudless a future open before her.

Gently and tenderly Sabretasche caressed and calmed her.

"My precious Violet, I would not have told you my story if I had known how it would pain you. I did not like you to be in ignorance of my previous marriage, and I could not tell you the fact without telling you also the history of the wretched woman who held from me the title you have promised me to bear. But do not let it weigh on you, dearest. Great as my wrongs were, I can forgive them now. She can harm me no longer; and you will teach me in the sunshine of your presence to forget the deadly shadow of her past. I will tell you no more to-day, you look so pale. What will your mother say to me for sending away your brilliant bloom? She likes me

little enough already! Do you wish me to go on? Then promise me to give me my old gay smiles; I should be sad, indeed, for my early fate to cast the slightest shade on your shadowless life. Well, I left her, as I said. It is useless to dwell on the anguish, the misery, the shame which had crowded into my young heart. If I had not cared for her it would not have stung me so keenly, but I *had* loved her generously and truly and faithfully until then. To have my name stained, my wife stolen from me, by such as that low-bred and spiritless cur, and to know that to this woman I was chained for life, fettered till one or other of us should be laid in the grave!—it was enough to drive a man of one-and-twenty to any recklessness or any crime. With that shame and horror upon me, I had to watch over the dying hours of my father. He died, very shortly afterward, in my arms, gently and peacefully, as he had spent his life. I saw the grave close over one from whom I had never had an angry word or a harsh glance, and at once reckless and heart-broken, I came to England. I took legal advice about my marriage; they told me it was perfectly legal and valid, and that the evidence, however morally and rationally clear, was not strong enough to dissolve the unholy ties which bound me to one whom in my heart I knew as a virago, a liar, an adulteress, who would, if she could, have added murder to her list of crimes. Of her I never had heard a word. I left her, at once and forever, to her lovers and her fell passions.”

“Did the child die?” asked Violet. “I wish you had had no child, Vivian. I am jealous of anything and everything that has ever been yours; and, my Heaven! how I hate that woman and all belonging to her! Sin or no sin, I would give all I have on earth to revenge you. My dearest, my dearest! that *you* should have been so wronged.

Oh! pray God that I may live and make atonement to you."

"God reward you, my darling!" murmured Sabretasche, fondly. "You need be jealous of nothing in my past; Violet, none have been to me what you are and will be. I never remembered the child. She was nothing to me; how could I even know that she was mine? But some years afterward, they told me she had died in infancy. So best with such a mother! What could she but be now? I came to England, joined the Dashers, and began the life I have led ever since, plunging into the wildest dissipations, to try and still the fatal memories that stirred within me, revenging myself on that heartless and false sex whom I had before trusted and worshiped, gaining for myself the reputation, to which your mother and the rest of the world still hold, of a fascinating vaurien and an unscrupulous profligate, none guessing how my heart ached while my lips laughed; how, skeptical by force, I yet longed to believe; and how, amidst my pleasures and sedatives, excitements and stimulants, the heart of my boyhood craved to love and be loved! Three years after my arrival here, the sight of Guiseppe da Castrone recalled to me the past in all its hideous horror. What errand do you think he, shameless as his sister, came upon? None less than to extort money from me by the threat, in Sylvia's name, that she would come over to England and proclaim herself my wife. I was weak to yield his demand to him, and not to have the servants show him at once out of the house; but money was plentiful, his presence was loathsome; the idea of seeing Sylvia, of being forced to endure her presence, of having the mistress of young Lani known in England as my wife, was so horrible to me, that, without thinking, I snatched at the only means of security. I paid him what he asked—exorbitant, of course—and hung that other mill-

stone round my neck for life ! But I would have given half my fortune to avoid the bitter disgrace of my marriage being known, and brought constantly before me ; and a thousand out of the large income Moncrieff had left me seemed well paid, even every year or two, to avert the horror of her presence. From that time to within the last twelvemonth her brother has come to me, whenever his and her exchequer failed ; she was not above living on the husband she had wronged ! For nineteen years I kept my secret ; all I had to remind me of my fatal tie was the annual visit of Castrone. Can any one wonder that when I met you I forgot oftentimes my own fetters, and, what was worse, your danger ? In my many loves I had only, I confess, sought pleasure and revenged myself on Sylvia's sex—how could I think well or mercifully of women ? But you roused in me something infinitely stronger, deeper, and more tender. In you the soft idyls of my lost dreams lived again ; with you the grace and glory of my lost youth returned ; in you, for the first time, I realized all I had sacrificed in relinquishing my liberty. Before, as a man of the world—bitterly as I feel the secret disgrace of it—I had experienced no inconvenience from the tie. I had wooed many lightly, won them easily, forsaken them recklessly. None of the three could I do with you. *They* had only charmed my senses ; *you*, in addition, won into my heart ; they had amused me, you grew dear to me—a wide difference, Violet, in a woman's influence upon a man. At first, I confess I flirted carelessly with you, without thinking, as it had been my habit of doing with all women as fair as you are, without remembering my fetters or your danger. But when the full beauties of your heart and mind, rarer even than the rare beauty of your form and features, unfolded themselves to me for the first time, I remembered mercy, even while I learnt that for the last

time I loved. How great were my own sufferings I need not to tell you. Unable to bear the misery of constant intercourse with you, conscious in myself that if long under the temptation I should give way under it and say words for which, when you knew all, you might learn to hate me——”

“Oh, never, never!” whispered Violet, fondly. “I should always love you, Vivian, come what might.”

Sabretasche passed his hand fondly over her high-arched brow; his manner, always most soft and gentle, had deepened into a singularly loving tenderness with Violet, around whom all the inborn poetry and depth of feeling, which in its strength almost amounted to melancholy in this so-disant gay and fashionable *âme damnée* of aristocratic circles, had now gathered and intensified.

“My darling, I knew well that you would. But it was the very consciousness that, *if* you loved, you would love very differently to the frivolous and inconstant women of our set, which roused me into mercy to you, where with others I had always forgotten it, for the simple reason that they never merited it or needed it. So I left for the south of France, to give myself time for reflection, or—vain hope!—to forget you, as I had forgotten many; to give you time to find, if it so chanced, some one who, more worthy of your attachment, would reward it with the legitimized happiness which the world allows and smiles upon approvingly. I traveled to the Pyrenees. In a week from leaving London I was in Biarritz, intending to go on eastward into the Orientales, to stay there for some time for the sake of the sea-bathing; but the first evening I was at Biarritz I took up, over my chocolate, an Italian newspaper—how it chanced to come there I knew not—it was the *Nazionale* of Naples. Among the deaths I read that of my wife! Great Heaven! that a husband’s first thoughts should be a thanksgiving for the death of the woman he

once fondly loved, over whose sleep he once watched, and in whom he once reposed his name, his trust, his honor! Violet, what I felt when that single line in the Italian journal gave me back liberty, life, youth, everything that existence holds of brightest and sweetest in giving me *you*, words could never say! I read it over and over again, the letters danced and swam before my eyes; I, whom the world says nothing can disturb or ruffle, shook in every nerve, as I leaned out into the evening air, dizzy and delirious with the rush of past memories and future hopes that surged over my brain. With that one fateful line I was *free*! No prisoner ever welcomed liberty with such rapturous ecstasy as I. The blight was off my life, the curse was taken from my soul, my heart beat free again as it had never done during the twenty long years that the bitter shame and misery of my marriage had weighed upon me. Love and youth and joy were mine again. A new existence, fresher and fairer, had come back to me. My cruel enemy, she who had corroded my life with her fiend-like and venomous tongue, who had given my honor to a low-bred cur, only fit to associate with my footmen, and who had yet stooped to live on the money she robbed from the boy-husband she had wronged, was dead, and I at last was free—free to offer to you the truest and fondest love man ever offered woman—free to receive at your hands the golden gifts, robbed from me for so long. Violet—dearest, I know that I shall not ask for them in vain.”

She lifted her face to his with broken yet eloquent words, still greater eloquence in her eyes gleaming with unshed tears; and as his lips lingered upon hers, the new youth and joy he coveted came back to Sabretasche, never, he fondly thought, to leave him again while both their lives should last.

PART THE FOURTEENTH.

I.

ONE OF THE SUMMER DAYS BEFORE THE STORM.

"You look down in the mouth, old boy," said Tom Severn, of the Queen's Bays, to Regalia, at that lavish pleasant affair, a mess-breakfast, which the Guards were giving to us.

"Regalia's in deep for Philaster, and he's going lame," suggested Curly.

"No; he's turned over Julia for La Vivonne, and the inconstancy's weighing on his mind," put in Rushbrooke of Ours.

"Wrong, all of you!" laughed Monckton, who always said an ill-natured thing if he had the opportunity. "Regalia's done for, since Sabretasche has cut in and carried off that handsome Molyneux girl!"

"Regalia's plenty of fellow-sufferers, then," said De Vigne, who, with all his cynicism, always came to anybody's rescue if he thought them ill treated. "I expect there'll be no end of Found Drowned in the Serpentine, since Sabretasche has committed himself—of women for him! of men for her! Violet is positively an injury to the service!"

"Court-martial her!" cried Curly. "She'd look devilish pretty drummed through a regiment!"

"I am sorry," continued De Vigne, pathetically, "that Sabretasche is going to marry. I never dreamed he would. I should as soon have thought of his turning brewer, or writing a book on the Millennium. It is such a pity!"

He is such a charming fellow as he is! His little dinners are perfection, and I never enjoy lansquenet anywhere so much as at his house."

"Selfish enough, De Vigne, I must say," said I, laughing. "It would be rather hard to deprive poor Sabretasche of his love because you like his lansquenet. But take courage: we shall have him and his card-parties all the same. Violet's not the sort of girl to put a stop to his enjoying life."

"No; I admit Violet is the only woman to whom I could endure to see him sacrificed. *En même temps*," said De Vigne, with his usual sarcastic fling, which he could no more help than a schoolboy can help shying a stone when he sees a cat, "you know, my dear Arthur, as well as I do, that there is a peculiarly frosty breath in marriage, which chills the sweetest temper, and changes the brightest sunbeams into the hardest icicles!" With which De Vigne sat himself down to *écarté* with Regalia at five guineas a side.

So we talked over Sabretasche and his fiancée, while they, regardless of the babble going on in all the noisy brooks of gossip that brawled and rippled through the many channels of West-end talk, spent, I have no doubt, days that were entered with a mark of purest gold in the cloudless life of each. His old accustomed bay-window saw comparatively little of him; his mornings were given to Violet in the delicious *tête-à-tête* of her boudoir; in the Ride and the Ring he was by her side or in her carriage; the whist-tables of the United, the guinea points of the Travelers', the coulisses of the Opera, the lansquenet parties at De Vigne's, saw but very little of him; he was waltzing with her at balls, or singing Italian with her after dinner-parties. The Colonel, for the time being, was lost to us and to "life," which he had lived so recklessly and

graced so brilliantly for so many years; and I suppose his new occupation charmed him, for when we did get an hour or two of him, he was certainly more delightful than ever: there was such a joyous ring in his ever-brilliant wit—such gentleness and kindness, to all people and all things, out of the abundance of his own happiness—such a depth of rest and contentment, in lieu of that touching and deep-seated melancholy, which had gone down so far into his character under his gay and fashionable exterior, that it had seemed as if nothing would uproot it. So happily does human life forget its past sorrows in present joy, as the green meadows grow dark or golden, according as the summer sun fades on and off them, that the bitterness so long upon him from his unhappy marriage was entirely dissipated in the beauty of his new existence, and though probably, as time rolled on, the past would occasionally rise up, and the pain of the last twenty years leave a certain sadness upon his character, now, in the fullness of his love and the sweetness of his dawning future, Vivian Sabretasche could from his heart say what *some* men go down from their cradles to their graves without knowing even for an hour or a day—that life had given him perfect and cloudless happiness! It was now the first week of June, the season was at its height, and the 10th of July was fixed for Sabretasche's marriage. He had pressed the Molyneux for a shorter engagement than is usual, and pères et mères show no inclination to procrastinate when men offer such splendid settlements as the Colonel, out of pure lavish love for his young bride, voluntarily proposed! So the marriage-day was fixed, and Sabretasche had bought a villa beside Windermere to enjoy a seclusion such as suited his poet's heart and lover's dreams; he said he had no fancy to spoil his golden days in railway carriages and continental hotels, and the Dilcoosha, perfect already,

was being refitted, and having its lilies painted and its gold refined to be worthy to shrine his new and dearest idol. All the prosaic details that attend on love in these days of matter-of-fact and almighty dollars, (how often to tarnish and corrode it!) caught the soft hues of his own poetic and tender nature, and grew in his hands into the generous gifts of love to love, the outward symbols of the inward worship. So surrounded, and with such a future lying before her, in its brilliant colors and seductive witchery, can you not fancy that our ever-radiant belle looked—*how*, words are not warm enough to tell; it would need a brush of power even diviner than Raphael's to picture to you Violet Molyneux's face as it was then, the incarnation of young, shadowless, tender, brilliant, impassioned life! God help us! when the summer day is at its brightest, closest hovers the brooding storm!

The Derby fell late that year. The day was a brilliant, sunshiny one, as it ought to be, for it is the sole day in our existence when we are excited, and do not, as usual, think it necessary to be bored to death to save our characters. We confess to a wild anxiety at the magic word "Start!" to which no other sight on earth could rouse us. We watch with thrilling eagerness the horses rounding the corner as we should watch the beauty of no Galatea, however irresistible, and we see the favorite win the distance with enthusiastic joy, to which all the other excitements upon earth could never fire our blood. From my earliest recollection since I rode races with the stable-boys at five years old, and was discovered indulging in that reprehensible pastime by my tutor, (a mild and inoffensive Ch. Ch. man, to whom *Bell's Life* was a dead letter, and the chariot-racing at Rome and Elis the only painful reading in the classics,) my passion has been for the Turf. No sight is to me more delightful than all those thorough-breds at the Warren, with their

body-clothing off, and their firm, slender limbs uncovered; no moment dearer than when the favorite, bearing the hopes and the fears of thousands, skimming the earth like a swallow in its flight, pulls up at the distance, with the ruck straggling behind him, while myriad shouts from the stands and the ropes proclaim him winner of the Derby. The Turf!—there must needs be some strange attraction in our English sport—it has lovers more faithful than women ever win; it has victims, voluntary holocausts upon its altars, more numerous than any creed that ever brought men to martyrdom; its iron chains are hugged where other silken fetters have grown wearisome; its fascination lasts, while the taste of the wine may pall and the beauty of feminine grace may satiate. Men are constant to its mystic charms where they tire of love's beguilements; they give with a lavish hand to it what they would deny to any living thing. Olden chivalry, modern ambition, boast no disciples so faithful as the followers of the Turf, and to the Turf men yield up what women whom they love would ask in vain: lands, fortune, years, energies, powers—till their mistress has beggared them of all, even too often robbed them of honor itself!

To the Derby, of course, we went—Curly, I, and some other men, in De Vigne's drag, lunched off Rhenish, and Guinness, and Moët, and all the delicacies Fortnum and Mason ever packed in a hamper for Epsom; and drove back to mess along the crowded road. Dropping the others en route, De Vigne drove me on to dine with him at his own house in Grosvenor Place.

"Come into my room first, old fellow," he said, as we passed up the stairs. "I bought my wedding-presents for Sabretasche and his wife that will be, yesterday, and I want to show them to you. Halloa! what the deuce is that fellow Raymond doing?—reading my letters, as I live! I think I am fated to come across rascals! How-

ever, as they make up nine-tenths of the world, I suppose I can't be surprised at the constant rencontres!"

From the top of the staircase we saw, though at some distance, straight through into De Vigne's bed-room, the door of which stood open. At the writing-table in the center sat his head valet, Raymond, so earnestly reading some of the letters upon it, that he never heard or saw us. De Vigne sometimes wrote his letters in his bed-room; he always read those by the first post over his matutinal coffee; and as he was immeasurably careless both with his papers and his money, his servants had always full opportunity to peruse the one and take the other. If he had seen the man taking ten pounds off his dressing-table, he would have had a fling at human nature, thought it was the way of that class of people, and kept the man on, because he was a useful servant, and no more of a thief, probably, than another would be. But—no matter in what rank—a dishonorable or a sneaky thing, a breach of trust in any way, always irritated him beyond conception; he had been betrayed in greater or minor things so often, and treachery was so utterly foreign to his own frank and impetuous nature, that his impatience at it was very pardonable. I could see his ominous eyebrows contract; he went up, stretched his hand over the man's shoulder, and took the letter quietly out of his grasp.

"Go to Mills for your next month's wages, and leave this evening."

Raymond, sleek, and smooth, and impenetrable as he was, started violently, and changed color; but his answer was very ready.

"Why, Major? I was merely sorting your papers, sir. You have often ordered me to do that."

"No lies—leave the room!" said his master, briefly, as he turned to me. "Arthur, here are the things I mentioned. Come and look at them."

His valet did not obey his order; he still lingered. He began again, in his soft, purring tone:

"You wouldn't dismiss me like this, Major, if you knew what I could tell you."

"Leave the room, and send Robert to me," said De Vigne, with that stern hauteur that always came up when people teased him. He had had his own way from his infancy, and was totally unaccustomed to being crossed. It is bad training for the world for a man to have been obeyed from his cradle.

"You would give me a good deal, Major, to know what I know. I have a secret in my keeping, sir, that you would pay me handsomely to learn——"

"Silence—and leave the room!" reiterated De Vigne, with an impatient stamp of his foot.

Raymond bowed, with a grace becoming a groom of the chambers.

"Certainly, sir. I hope you will pardon me for having troubled you."

Wherewith he backed out with all the sang-froid imaginable, and De Vigne turned to me:

"Cool fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes; but you might as well have heard what he had to say."

"My dear fellow, why?" cried De Vigne, with his most grandiose and contemptuous smile. "What could that man possibly know that could concern me? It was only a ruse to get money out of me, or twist his low-bred curiosity in spying over my letters into a matter of moment. I was especially annoyed at it, because the letter he was reading is a note from Alma: nothing in it—merely to answer a question I asked her about one of her pictures; but you know the child has an enthusiastic way of expressing herself at all times—means nothing, but sounds a great deal,

and the 'Dear Sir Folko,' and 'your ever-grateful Little Alma,' and all the rest of it—the days are so long when I don't go to see her, and she envies the women who are in my set and always with me—and all that—reads rather *I* know how she means it, but a common man like Raymond will put a very different significance upon it."

"Most probably. *I* know how she means it too; still, you know the old saying, De Vigne, relative to toying with edged tools?"

"No, I don't," said De Vigne, curtly; "or at least I should say I know edged tools, when I see them, as well as you do, and am old enough, if I did come across them, not to cut myself with them. I can't think what has possessed Sabretasche and you to try and sermonize to me! Heaven knows you need to lecture yourselves, both of you. I don't stand it very well from *him*; but I'll be shot if I do from you, you young dog, whom I patronized in jackets at Frestonhills! Get out with you, and let Robert take the Derby dust off you in the blue-room."

And he threw Alma's note into a private drawer (to be kept, I wonder?) and pushed me out by the shoulders.

No Cup day ever was so ill-bred as to send dusky English rain-drops on the exquisite toilettes that grace the most aristocratic race in the universe, and we had "Queen's weather" for Ascot. We had all betted on *La Violette*, the Colonel's beautiful chestnut, who was the favorite in the betting-rooms at Tattersall's as well, and as Tom Severn said, he didn't know which looked the loveliest in its own way, *La Violette* with her wild eye, her graceful symmetrical limbs, and her coat like silk, or *Violet* herself, with her Paris toilette, her brilliant beauty, and her joyous unrestrained animation of speech and of regard. *La Violette* won the Ascot Cup, distancing all the rest of the first flight at an easy swinging gallop, without any apparent

effort; and when we had seen the race fairly run, we went up to the Molyneux carriage to congratulate the Colonel on his chestnut's triumph: Sabretasche being missed from his usual circle of titled betting-men and great turfites, and, for the first time in all his life, watching Ascot run, with his attention more given to the face beside him than the course before.

"I knew we should win!" cried Violet, with the greatest delight in her namesake's triumph. "Did not I tell you so, Major De Vigne?"

"You did, fair prophetess; and if you will always honor me with your clairvoyant instructions, I will always make up my books accordingly."

"The number of bets I have made to-day is something frightful," answered Violet. "If that darling horse had failed me I should have been utterly ruined in gloves."

"As it is, you will have bracelets and *négligés* enough to fill Hunt and Roskell's. You are most dangerous to approach, Miss Molyneux, in more ways than one," said Vane Castleton, who was leaning against the carriage door flirting with her mother.

"Oh! pray don't, Lord Vane; you talk as if I were some grim and terrible Thalestris!" cried Violet, with contemptuous impatience, looking at Sabretasche with a laugh.

It was pretty to see how, in the midst of her laughter, and chat, and merriment with other men, she turned to him every minute, to meet the gaze of eyes which very rarely left their study of her face. They were both at once too delicate and too high-bred to bring any show or demonstration of their attachment abroad in society; still the brightness of her regard when it turned on him, the softness of his voice when he addressed her, were silent evidences enough of the sympathy between them.

"Thalestris!" repeated Sabretasche, smiling. "You

have but very little of the Amazone about you; not enough, perhaps, if your lines had fallen in hard places."

"Instead of rose-leaves! Yet I think I can fight my own battles?"

"Oh yes!" laughed Sabretasche. "I never meant to hint but what you had, in very great perfection, that prerogative par excellence of woman, that Damascus blade—whose brilliant chasing makes us treat it as a toy, until the point has wounded us—the tongue!"

"If mine is a Damascus blade, yours is an Excalibur itself!" cried Violet, with her air moqueur. "Le fourgon se moque de la pelle, monsieur!"

"An English inelegance taking refuge in a foreign idiom. What true feminine diplomacy!" laughed Sabretasche, resting his eyes on her with that deep tenderness for her, for all she did, and said, and thought, which had grown into his life for Violet Molyneux.

She laughed too—that sweet, gay laugh of perfect happiness. There are times when a simple word will woo us easily to laughter, there are others when all the wit in Europe fails to rouse a heart-felt smile.

"Ah! there is her Majesty going off the stand—before Queen Violet goes, too!" she went on. "Do tell me what I had to ask Major De Vigne. I know it was something very important, but I cannot remember, by any exertion of memory, whatever it could be."

"What a happy thing for you that I can remember your affairs as well as my own," smiled Sabretasche. "You wanted to ask him about Miss Tressillian, did you not?"

"Oh yes! Thank you so much. Colonel Sabretasche tells me, Major De Vigne, that you know the artist of that lovely 'Louis Dix-sept,' and that she is a young lady living at Richmond. May I go and see her?"

"Certainly, if you will be so kind."

De Vigne felt a certain annoyance; why, I doubt if he could have told—a certain selfish desire to keep his little flower blooming unseen, save by his own eyes, acting unconsciously upon him.

"The kindness will be to me. Is she young?"

"Yes."

"How young?"

"Eighteen or nineteen, I believe."

"And very pretty?"

"Really I cannot say; ladies' tastes differ from ours on such points."

"I hope she is," said Violet, plaintively. "I never did like plain people, never could! I dare say it is very wrong, but I think one likes a handsome face as naturally as one prefers a lily to a dandelion; and I am quite certain the artist of that sketch *must* be pretty—she could not help it."

"She *is* pretty," said Sabretasche; "at least attractive—what you will call so."

"Then will you take me to see her to-morrow, Major De Vigne, and introduce us? Of course you will; no one refuses me anything! You can come with me, can you not, Vivian? We will all ride down there before luncheon, for once in awhile, shall we?"

"Yes, and lunch at the Dilcoosha, if Lady Molyneux permits?"

"Go where? Do what?" asked the Viscountess, languidly, turning reluctantly from her, I presume, interesting conversation with Vane Castleton.

Sabretasche repeated his question.

"To see an artist, and lunch with you? Oh yes, I shall be very happy. I don't think we have any engagements for to-morrow morning," said Lady Molyneux, turning again to Castleton. "Are you going to the Lumleys to-night, Vane?"

The morning after, half a dozen of us rode down out of Lowndes Square. First, the Colonel and his young fiancée; next, the Viscountess and her pet, Vane Castleton; then De Vigne and I—De Vigne, I must confess, in one of his haughtiest, most reserved, and most impatient moods, annoyed, more than he knew, at having to take people to see Alma, whom he had had to himself so long that he seemed to consider any other visit to her as an invasion on his own “vested interests,” and besides, he was irritated to be tricked into taking Vane Castleton there, of all men in the world. But Lady Molyneux had asked him; De Vigne knew nothing of his addition to the party until he had reached Lowndes Square, and to make any comment on, or opposition to it, would have been as useless as unwise. The Colonel and Violet led the way. Sabretasche rode with the skill and speed of an Arab; and she never looked to better advantage than en Amazone; she rode, too, with admirable fearlessness and grace, and her dark tight riding-jacket, with its little gold agraffes, and her black felt hat, with its long soft plumes nestling among her bright chestnut hair, showed to full beauty the perfect contour of her slight form, and the aristocratic and delicate loveliness of her face. I could not wonder at Sabretasche’s pride in, and tenderness over her, as she turned round her horse’s head as they drew near St. Crucis, her eyes gleaming and her cheeks a little flushed, and waited till we came up to them.

“Are we near the house, Major De Vigne?”

“Within a stone’s-throw.”

“And does Miss Tressillian live there all alone?”

“No. The house is kept by an old nurse of hers.”

“An old nurse? Poor girl, how lonely she must be! I am very sorry for her.” And Violet contrasted her own perfect joy and golden future with Alma Tressillian’s

desolate solitude, and confided it to Sabretasche as they cantered on again together.

"I am too happy, Vivian!" she cried, passionately. "Sometimes I lie awake at night, thinking of you, till I grow dizzy with my own delirious joy. What have I done to merit *it*—or *you*? Sometimes I almost tremble; I am so afraid it should not last!"

"My darling, I am grieved at that," said Sabretasche, fondly. "I would not have one shadow rest on your life if I could help it. I have had too much shadow on my own not to guard yours from even the most fleeting cloud. The regret and sorrow of twenty years have been banished off my heart in our present joy; no fear or pain must enter yours, so young and bright. While we both live, my dearest, our happiness *must* last. Very soon, no power on earth can separate us, and we shall never part even for an hour—a moment. Very soon our lives will be as one, Violet—our happiness *must* last!"

"Does Miss Tressillian live alone with an old nurse, Major De Vigne?" Lady Molyneux was asking, in that voice which was languor and superciliousness embodied. "How very queer—so young a girl! To be sure, she is only an artist! Artists *are* queer people, generally. Still, it is very odd!"

"Artists, like other people, must live; and if they have happened to have lost their parents, they cannot live with them, I presume," responded De Vigne, dryly. The Viscountess had always an irritating effect upon his nerves.

"No, of course not; still, there are plenty of places where a girl can take refuge that are most irreproachable—a school, for instance. She would be much better, I should fancy, as a teacher, or a ——"

"She happens to be a lady," interrupted De Vigne,

quietly, "and nurtured in as much luxury and refinement as your daughter."

"Indeed!" said the Viscountess, with a nasty sneer and upraised eyebrows. "Pray, is she quite a—quite a *proper* person for Violet to visit?"

De Vigne's slumbering wrath roused up; every vein glowed with righteous anger and scorn for the pharisaic peeress, of whose own undercurrents he knew a story or two not quite so spotless as might have been, and he looked down at her steadily and contemptuously.

"Lady Molyneux, if the ladies your daughter meets in our set at court and drawing-rooms, balls and operas,—if they, the immaculate Cordelias and Lucretias of English matronage, could lay claim to half as pure a life, and half as pure a heart, as the young girl you are so ready to suspect and to condemn, it might be better for them and—for their husbands!"

It was a more outspoken, and, in this case, more personal, speech than is customary to the bland reserve and reticence customary in "good society," where we may sin, but may not say we do, and where it is only permitted to ridicule or blackguard our friends behind their backs. The Viscountess reddened under her delicate rouge, and turned with a laugh to Vane Castleton. The white gate and dark thatched gables of St. Crucis Farm were now close at hand, and De Vigne rode forward.

"What a picturesque place!" cried Violet, dropping her reins on her mare's neck. "Oh, Vivian, do look at those little lovely yellow chickens, and that great China rose climbing all over the house with the honey-suckle, and veritable lattice windows, and that splendid black cat in the sunshine! Wouldn't you like to live here?"

Sabretasche shook his head, and would have crossed himself had he been a Catholic:

"My dear Violet! Heaven forefend! I cannot say I should."

"Nor she either," laughed De Vigne. "She will be much more in her element in its neighbor, your luxurious Dilcoosha."

Sabretasche smiled, Violet's delicate color deepened, to vie with the China roses she admired, while the Colonel lifted her from her saddle close to the objects of her attachment, the little lovely yellow chickens, certainly the prettiest of all new-born things, humiliatingly pretty beside the rough ugliness of new-born man, who piques himself on being lord of all created creatures; God knows why, except that he is slowest in development and quickest in evil!

Certainly the old farm-house looked its best that day; the gray stone, the black wooden porch, the dark thatch, with its somber lichens, that had all appeared so dark and dreary in the dim February light in which we first saw them, were only antiquated and picturesque in the full glow of the June sunlight. The deep cool shadows of the two great chestnut-trees beside it, with their large leaves and snowy pyramidal blossoms, the warm colors of the China roses and the honey-suckles against its walls, of the full-blossomed apple-trees, and the fragrant lilacs—those delicate perfumy boughs that Horace Walpole, the man of wit and gossip, courts and salons, patches and powder, still found time to love—gave it the picturesqueness and brightness which charmed Violet at first sight; for not more different is the view of human life in youth and age than the view of the same place in summer and winter. If our life were but all youth! if our year were but all summer!

Out of the wide, low lattice window of her own room, half shadowed by the great branches of the chestnut-trees,

with their mélange of green and white, yet with the full glow of the golden morning sunbeams, and the rose-hued reflex of the China roses upon her, Little Alma was leaning as we alighted. Like her home, she chanced to look her prettiest and most picturesque that day, (she was *journalière*—expressive faces that chiefly depend upon animation and refined intelligence always are;) she was dressed in what Boughton Tressillian had always liked best to see her, what she had worn in the hot season at Lorave, and still wore in the warm weather here, in something very white and gossamer-like, with blue ribbon round her waist, while her golden hair, without anything on it, or any perceivable means of holding it up, made a sunny framework for her face. She was a pretty picture shrined in the dark chestnut-boughs and the glowing flowers—a picture which we could see, though she could not see us.

"Is that Alma Tressillian? How lovely she is!" cried Violet, enthusiastically.

Sabretasche, thinking of her alone, smiled at her ecstasies. The Viscountess raised her glass with supercilious and hypercritic curiosity. Vane Castleton did the same, with the look in his eyes that he had given the night before to the very superior ankles of a new danseuse. De Vigne caught the look—by George! how his eyes flashed—and he led the way into the house, sorely wrathful within him. Alma's innate high breeding never showed itself more than now when she received her unexpected influx of visitors. The girl had seen no society, had never been "finished," nor taught to "give a reception;" yet her inborn self-possession and tact never deserted her, and if she had been brought up all her days in the salons of the Tuileries or St. James, it would have been impossible to show more calm and winning grace than she did at this sudden inroad on the conventual solitude of her studio. Violet and she

fraternized immediately; it was no visit from a fashionable beauty to a friendless artist, for Violet was infinitely too much of a lady not to recognize the intuitive aristocracy which in the Little Tressillian was so thoroughly stamped in blood and feature, manner and mind, and would have survived all adventitious circumstances or surroundings. There was a certain resemblance which we had often noticed between them in their natures, their vivacity, their perfect freedom from all affectations. Violet's manner, when she chose, was soft and sweet enough to have melted the Medusa into amiability; Alma's vivacity and that sense of power, strong as it is modest, which the sense of genius always confers, especially where, as in her case, it is backed by talent of a high order in many other things, prevented her ever knowing such a thing as shyness, and (now that she had been relieved of all jealousy of her by De Vigne's information that Violet was engaged to the Colonel) she had returned to her old admiration and inclination for the brilliant belle who had picked up her sketches on the pavé of Pall Mall.

The Viscountess sat down on a low chair in a state of supercilious apathy. She cared nothing for pictures. The parrot's talk, which was certainly very voluble, made her head ache, and Vane Castleton was infinitely too full of admiration of Alma to please her ladyship. De Vigne, when he had done the introductory part of the action, played with Sylvio, only looking up when Alma addressed him, and then answering her more distantly and briefly than his wont. He could have shot Castleton with great pleasure for the free glance of his bold light eyes, and such a murderous frame of mind rather spoils a man for society, however great he may generally be as a conversationalist!

We, however, managed to keep up the ball of talk very gayly, even without him. It was chiefly, of course, upon

art—turning on Alma's pictures, which drew warm praises from Violet and Castleton, and, what was much more, from that most fastidious critic and connoisseur, the Colonel, partly, I dare say, to please his fiancée, but partly because they really were wonderfully clever, and he thought them so. We were in no hurry to leave. Castleton evidently thought the chevelure dorée charming; women were all of one class to him—all to be bought; some with higher prices and some with lower, and he drew no distinction between them, except that some were blondes and some brunes. Violet seemed to like leaning against the old oak window-seat scenting the roses, chatting with Alma, and listening to Sabretasche's classic and charming disquisitions upon art, and Alma herself was in her element with these highly-bred and highly-educated people. We were in no hurry to go; but Lady Molyneux was, and was much too bored to stay there long.

"You will come and see me?" said her daughter, holding out her hand to Alma. "Oh yes, you must. Mamma, is not Thursday our next soirée? Miss Tressillian would like to meet some of those célèbres, I am sure; and they would like to see her, for every one has admired her 'Louis Dix-sept' so much. Have you any engagement?"

Of course Alma had none. She gave a glance at De Vigne, to see if he wished her to go, but as he was absorbed in teaching Sylvio to sit on his hind legs and hold his riding-whip on his nose, she found no responsive glance, and had to accept it without consulting him. Violet taking acceptance for granted, and her mamma, who did not care to contradict her before Sabretasche, and intended to reprimand her in private for her ridiculous folly in taking up this little orphan, joining languidly in the invitation, the Little Tressillian stood booked for the Thursday soirée in Lowndes Square.

Violet bade her good-by with that suave warmth which fashionable life could never ice out of her, and the Viscountess swept out of the room, and down the garden, in no very amiable frame of mind. She rather affected patronizing artistes of all kinds, and had brought out several protégés, though she unhappily had dropped them as soon as their novelty had worn off; but to patronize an artiste of nineteen, whose face Vane Castleton admired, was a very different matter, for my lady was just now as much in love as she had ever been in love with anything, except herself, and there is no passion more exigent and tenacious than the fancy of a woman *passée* herself for a young and handsome man! De Vigne was a little behind the rest as he left the room, and Alma called him back, her face full of the delight that Violet's invitation had given her.

"Oh, Sir Folko! I am so happy. I shall be in your set at last. Was it not kind of Miss Molyneux?"

"Very kind indeed."

"Don't you like me to go?"

"I? What have I to do with it? On the contrary, I think you will enjoy yourself very much."

"You will be there, of course?"

"I don't know. Perhaps."

"Oh, you will," cried Alma, plaintively. "You would not spoil all my pleasure, surely? I do so long to see you in your own society. Only mind you don't talk to any one so much as you do to me!"

"Nonsense!" said De Vigne, half laughing *malgré lui*.

"Good-by, *petite*, I must go."

"But why have you spoken so little to me this morning?" persisted Alma.

"You have had plenty of others to talk to you," said De Vigne, coldly. "At least, you have seemed very well amused."

"Sir Folko, that is very cruel," cried Alma, vehemently. "You know, as well as I can tell you, that if you are not kind to me, all the world can give me no pleasure. You know that there is no one I care to talk to compared with you."

"Nonsense! Good-by, petite," said De Vigne, hastily, but kindly, for his momentary irritation had passed, as he swung through the garden and threw himself across his horse.

"What a little darling she is, Vivian!" said Violet, as they cantered along the road. "Don't you think so?"

Sabretasche laughed.

"Really, my pet, I did not notice her very much. There is but one 'darling' for me now."

"Deuced nice little thing that!" said Castleton to me; "uncommonly pretty feet she has; I caught sight of one of them. I suppose she's De Vigne's game, bagged already, probably, else, on my honor, I shouldn't mind dethroning Coralie and promoting her. French women have such deuced extravagant ideas."

I believe if De Vigne had heard him he would have knocked Castleton straight off his horse. His cool way of disposing of Alma irritated even *me* a little, and I told him, a trifle sharply, that I thought he had better call on his "honor" to remember that Miss Tressillian was a lady by birth and by education, and that she was hardly to be classed with the Coralies of our acquaintance. To which Castleton responded with a shrug of his shoulders and a twist of his blond whiskers:

"Bless your soul, my dear fellow, women are all alike! Never knew either you or De Vigne scrupulous before;" and rode on with the Viscountess, asking me, with a sneer, if I was "the Major's game-keeper."

De Vigne was very quick to act, but he was unwilling

to analyze. It always fidgeted him to reason on, to dissect, and to investigate his own feelings; he was not cold enough to sit on a court-martial on his own heart, to cut it up and put it in a microscope, like Gosse over a frog or a dianthis, or to imitate De Quincey's raffiné habit of speculating on his own emotions. He was utterly incapable of laying his own feelings before him, as an anatomist lays a human skeleton, counting the bones, and muscles, and points of ossification, it is true, but missing the flesh, the coloring, the quick flow of blood, the warm moving life which gave to that bare skeleton all its glow and beauty. De Vigne acted, and did not stop to ask himself why he did so nine times out of ten; therefore he never inquired, or thought of inquiring, why he had experienced such unnecessary and unreasonable anger at Castleton and Alma, but only felt remorsefully that he had lacked kindness in not sympathizing with the poor child in her very natural delight at her invitation to Lowndes Square. Whenever he thought he had been unkind, if it were to a dog, he was not easy till he had made reparation; and not stopping to remember that unkindness from him might be the greater kindness in the end, he sent her down on Thursday morning as exquisite a bouquet as the pick of Covent Garden could give him, clasped round with two bracelets as delicate in workmanship as they were rare in value, with a line, "Wear them to-night in memory of your grandfather's friendship for 'Sir Folko.'"

Dear old fellow, (true heart and loyal friend; my blood always warms when I think of him or write his name!) Granville De Vigne's warm virtues led him as often into temptation as other men's cold selfishness or vice. When he sent that bouquet with his bracelets to the Little Tresillian, despite his passionate nature and his wild life, I am certain he had no deeper motive, no other thought,

than to make reparation for his unkindness, and to give her as delicately as he could ornaments he knew that she must need. With him no error was fore-planned and pre-meditated. He might have slain you in a passion perhaps, but he could never have stilettoed you in cold blood. There was not a taint of malice or design, not a trace of the "serpent nature" in his sweet and generous, frank and placable, though fiery and impatient character. My Orestes has always been very dear to me since the first day I saw our senior pupil at Frestonhills. God bless him! There must be great good in a man, even though the world ostracized and damned him ever so determinedly, who could make another man love him so truly and so well.

PART THE FIFTEENTH.

I.

HOW THE OLDEN DELIRIUM AWOKE LIKE A GIANT FROM
HIS SLUMBERS.

THE Molyneux rooms in Lowndes Square were full; not crowded, the Viscountess knew too well the art of society to cram her apartments, as is the present habitude, till lords and ladies jostle and crush one another like so many Johns and Marys crowding before a fair—the rooms were full, and "brilliantly attended," as the morning papers had it next day, for though they were of the fourth order of nobility, the Molyneux had as exclusive a set as any in town, and knew "everybody." "Everybody!" Comprehensive phrase! meaning, in *their* lips, just the crème de la crème, and nothing whatever below it; mean-

ing, in a Warden's, all his Chapter; in a school-girl's, all her school-fellows; in a leg's, all the "ossy-men;" in an author's, those who read him; in a painter's, those who praise him; in a rector's, those who testimonialize and saint him! In addition to the haute volée of fashion there was the haute volée of intellect at the Viscountess's soirée, for Lady Molyneux dearly loved to have a lion, (though whether a writer who honors the nations, or an Eastern prince in native ugliness and jewelry, was perhaps immaterial to her!) and many of our best littérateurs and artists were not only acquaintances of hers, but intimate friends of Sabretasche's, who at any time threw over the most aristocratic crush for the simplest intellectual réunion, preferring, as he used to say, the God-given cordon of Brain to the ribbons of Bath or Garter.

The rooms were full, the guests brilliant and well assorted; there were Garcia, and Grisi, and Gardoni in the music-room; there was dancing in the ball-room for inveterate waltzers like Curly or Violet; and in the drawing-rooms there was, rarest of all—though good singing and good waltzing are rare enough, in all conscience, Heaven knows!—there was good conversation, conversation worthy the name, with (*mirabile dictu!* in these days of didactic commonplace, and wit, God save the mark! heavy as a Suffolk cart-horse) repartee and discussion that would not have disgraced the charming evenings at Madame de Sablé's, or the circles at Strawberry Hill and Holland House.

I went there early, leaving a dinner-party in Eaton Square sooner than perhaps I should have done, from a trifle of curiosity I felt to see how the "Little Tressillian" comported herself in her new sphere; and I confess I did not expect to see her quite so thoroughly at home, and quite so much of a star in her own way as I found her to be.

I have told you she had nothing of Violet's regular and perfect beauty—regular as a classic statue, perfect as an exquisitely-tinted picture—yet, somehow or other, Alma *told* as well in her way as the lovely Irish belle in hers; told even better than the Lady Ela Ashburnington, our modern Medici Venus—but who, alas! like the Venus, never opens those perfectly-chiseled lips; or the exquisite Mrs. Tite Delafield,—whose form would rival Canova's Pauline, if it weren't made by her couturière; or even Madame la Duchesse de la Vieillecour, now that—ah me!—the sweet rose bloom is due to Palais Royal shops, and the once innocent lips only breathe coquetries studied beforehand, while her maid brushes out her long hair, and Gwen—pshaw! Madame la Duchesse—glances alternately from the Lys de la Vallée to her miroir face et nuque.

Yes, Alma won upon all; whether it was her freshness, whether it was her natural abandon, whether it was her unusual talent, wit, and gay self-possession, (for if there is a being on earth whom I hate 'tis Byron's "bread-and-butter miss,") I must leave. Probably, it was that nameless something which one would think Mephistopheles himself had given some women, so surely and so unreasoningly do we go down before it, whether we will or no. The women sneered at her, and smiled superciliously, but that was of course! See two pretty women look at each other—there is defiance in the mutual regard, and each thinks in her own heart, "*Je vais me froter contre Wellington!*" One might have imagined that those high-bred beauties, with their style and their Paris dress, their acknowledged beauty, and their assured conquests, could well have spared poor little Alma a few of the leaves out of their weighty bay wreaths. Yet I believe in my soul they grudged her even the stalks, and absolutely condescended to honor her with a sneer (surest sign of feminine envy) when they saw

not only a leaf or two, but a good many garlands of rose and myrtle going to her in the Olympian game of "Shining." Violet, the only woman I ever knew without a trace of envy or spite, occupied though she pardonably was with her own happiness, had taken care to circulate Alma's identity with the artist of the "Louis Dix-sept;" she had interested one or two of the Academicians (kind as your really "grands hommes" generally are to tyros) about her, and had introduced to her some of the "nicest men," according to Violet's idea of our niceness, which was, I dare say, according to our capabilities for intellectual conversation. So started, Alma was quite capable of holding her own, and of coming in at the distance with the best of them, and when I entered the ball-room I saw the little lady leaning on Curly's arm, after a galope with him, laughing and talking with him and half a dozen men—among them Castleton. Her own innate good taste had led her to dress solely in white, with a few white flowers and dark myrtle leaves laid on her golden hair; De Vigne's emeralds, flashing in the gas-lights, her sole ornaments. There was something uncommonly picturesque in her appearance; rooms filled like the *Molyneux*' were no slight test; but her extreme animation of feature, vivacity of manner, and ready wit—always to the point, but always spoken softly, merrily, laughingly, as if even the keen satire the Little Tressillian could on occasion deal out only came from the superabundance of her quick intelligence and joyous spirits—attracted all the men round her, if only in surprise at a new study, and gratitude to that "deuced amusing little thing" for a fresh sensation.

Alma, like all brilliant and lively women, enjoyed shining, and scintillating, and winning the admiration she was born to create. I would as soon, *entre nous*, believe in a child not liking bonbons, or in a jockey not caring to win

the Goodwood Cup, as I would believe in a woman not liking admiration—if she can get it! Perhaps but for her whole-hearted admiration for De Vigne, after whose epigrammatic talk and original character all men seemed very naturally to her *fade*, spiritless, and commonplace, Alma might have been a coquette—if you can fence well it were hard to hang up the foils all your days!

I could not say Alma was the belle of the rooms, because Violet Molyneux was that wherever she went; and had Violet been absent, Lady Ela, and Mrs. Tite, and Madame de la Vieillecour, aforesaid, must in justice have won the golden apple long before her—those three superb and royal beauties, with their pearls and their diamonds, their dentelle and their demi-trains, their usage du monde and their skillful flirtations; but Alma had more men round her than any other, I can assure you—Violet, to a certain extent, being tacitly left to the Colonel. An R. A. complimented Alma on her wonderful talent, a cabinet minister smiled at her repartee, a great *littérateur* exchanged mots with her, Curly fell more deeply in love with her than ever, Castleton was rapturous about her feet and ankles, very blasé men about town went the length of exciting themselves to ask her to dance, and Guardsmen warmed into stronger admiration than their customary *nil admirari*-ism usually permitted, about her. Yet she bent forward to me, as I approached her, with a very eager whisper:

“Oh, Captain Chevasney! isn’t Sir Folko—Major De Vigne—coming?”

I really couldn’t tell her, as I had not seen him all day, save for a few minutes in Pall Mall; and the dreadful disappointment on her face was exceedingly amusing. But a minute afterward her eyes flashed, the color deepened in her cheeks.

“There he is!” she said, with an under-breath of delight.

And her attention to Curly, and Castleton, and the other men, began to wander considerably.

There he was, leaning against the doorway, distinguishable from all around him by the stately set of his head and the "grand air" for which he had always been remarkable, even from his boyish days at Frestonhills. He looked bored, I was going to say, but that is rather too affected a thing, and not earnest nor ardent enough for any feeling of De Vigne's; it was rather the look of a man too impatient and too spirited for the quiet trivialities around him, who would prefer "fierce love and faithless war" to drawing-room flirtations and polite character—damning; the look of a horse who wants to be scenting powder and leading a charge, and is ridden quietly along smooth downs where nothing is stirring, with a curb which he does not relish. Ostensibly, he was chatting with a member of the Lower House; absolutely, he was watching Alma with that dark haughty look in his eyes, caused, I think, by a certain peculiarity of dropping the lashes half over them when he was angry, which made me fancy he was not over-pleased to see the men crowding round the little lady.

"He won't come and speak to me. Do go and ask him to come, Captain Chevasney!" whispered Alma, confidentially, to me.

I laughed—he had not been more than three minutes in the room!—and obeyed her behest.

"Your little friend wants you to go and talk to her, De Vigne."

He glanced toward her:

"She is quite as well without any attention from me, considering the reports that have already risen concerning us, and she seems admirably amused as it is."

"Halloa! are we jealous?"

"Jealous! Of what, pray?" asked my lord with supreme scorn.

And moving across the room at once in Alma's direction, (without thinking of it, I had suggested the very thing to send him to her, wayward fellow as he was, in sheer defiance,) he joined the group gathered round the attractive Little Tressillian, whose radiant smile at his approach made Castleton sneer, and poor Curly swear *sotto voce* under his silky blonde moustache. De Vigne, however, did not say much to her; he shook hands with her, said one or two things about the célèbres to whom she had been introduced, and talking with Tom Severn (whom Alma's chevelure dorée had attracted to her side) about the pigeon-match at Hornsey Wood that morning, left the little lady so much to the other men, that Alma, though he was within a yard of her, thought she preferred him infinitely more in her studio at St. Crucis than in the crowded salons of that "set" of his in which she had so wished to meet him.

The band began again one of D'Albert's most spirited waltzes, and Tom Severn whirled the Little Tressillian, according to engagement, into the circle, Alma giving De Vigne a very sad, reproachful glance as she went off on Tom's arm. De Vigne did not see it, or would not seem to see it, and leant against a console, talking to Madame de la Vieillecour; Gwen Brandling had loved a waltz as genuinely and gayly as a young débutante could; Madame la Duchesse scarcely thought it stately enough, reserved it only as a most immeasurable favor, and generally preferred refusing some dozen aspirants, and retaining them to flirt with round her sofa. But though he and madame talked very rapidly in French on all sorts of subjects and of numbers of mutual Paris friends, I do not fancy that the Duchess's fine eyes received the attention from him that did Alma's golden-haired head, white cloud-like dress, and

the little feet which had won Castleton's admiration, and which showed to perfection, long though her dress might be, as Severn whirled her round in the delicious, voluptuous, rapid waltz—that natural, entrancing, and Greek-like dance, of which I am not even yet blasé, nor shall be till I have the gout.

De Vigne talked to Madame de la Vieillecour, but he watched the Little Tressillian, who danced as lightly and as gracefully as a Spanish girl or an Eastern bayadère: watched her, the fact dawning on him, with a certain warning thrill, that she was not, after all, a little thing to laugh at, and play with, and pet innocently, as he did his spaniel or his parrot, but a woman impassioned, accomplished, fascinating, as dangerous to men as she was attractive to them, who could no more be trifled with without the trifling falling back again upon the trifter than champagne can be drunk like water, or absinthe taken to excess without harm, or opium eaten long without delirium more or less.

Certain jealousies surged up in his heart, certain embers that had slumbered long began to quicken into flame; the blood that he had tried to chill into ice-water rushed through his veins with something of its natural rapidity and fire. Warnings in plenty were given him that the passion which had before cost him so much was not dead in him, that the intoxication under which he had so often gone down might drown his reason and draw him under its delirious pains and raptures yet again. Good Heavens! could he think that at five-and-thirty his youth was crushed out of him?—could he hope that while life was still so young and feeling strong in him, passion could by any possibility have been dead? Warnings in plenty were given him, but his old impetuosity and impatience made him disdain them; and, indeed, in such things warnings

ever only serve to hasten what they try to avert. He had pooh-poohed Sabretasche's earnest and my half-laughing counsels; he heeded as little what ought to have roused him much more, the throbs of his own heart, and the passions stirring into life within him.

She was a child, he told himself; his own honor was guard enough against love growing up between them. So he would have said if he had ever reasoned on it. But he never, as I have observed, did reason on anything; he was not nearly cold or calculating enough for such self-examination, and even now, though jealousy was waking up in him, he was willfully blind to it and to the irritation which the sight of the other men crowding round and claiming her excited in him.

"Don't you mean to dance with me?" whispered Alma, piteously, as he passed her after the waltz was over.

"I seldom dance," he answered.

It was the truth: waltzing had used to be a passion with him, but since the Trefusis had waltzed his reason away, the dance had brought disagreeable associations with it.

"But you *must* waltz with me!"

"Hush! All the room will hear you," said De Vigne, smiling in spite of himself. "Let me look at your list, then!"

"Oh, I would not make any engagements. I might have been engaged ten deep, Sir Folko, but I kept them all free for you."

"May I have the honor of the next waltz with you, then, Miss Tressillian?" asked De Vigne, in a louder tone, for the benefit of the people round.

Of course he got an eager assent, and, leaving her the center of her little *pro tempo* court, he strolled out of the ball-room, chatted over the Reform Bill with a Right Honorable, who urged him, with all the eloquence of which

he, an accomplished speaker, was master, to stand for his borough in a coming election—an honor De Vigne laughingly repudiated: he would lead a charge, he said, with pleasure, any day, for his country, but he really could not sacrifice himself to wind red tape for the nation. Then he strolled on through the other apartments, saying a few words to his myriad acquaintances, listened with Sabretasche and Violet to a duo of Mario and Grisi's, and went back to the ball-room just in time for Alma's waltz. As he put his arm round her, and whirled her into the circle, he remembered, with a shudder at the memory, that the last woman he had waltzed with was the Trefusis. In India wilder sports and more exciting amusements had filled his time, and since he had been in England he had chiefly frequented men's society.

"You had my note, Sir Folko?" was Alma's first question. "I could never thank you for your beautiful gifts, I could never tell you what happiness they gave me, what I felt when I saw them, how grateful I am for all your kindness, how I prize it, how much I would give to be able to repay it!"

"You have said far more than enough, petite," said De Vigne, hastily.

"No!" persisted Alma, "I could *never* say enough to thank you for all your lavish kindness to me."

"Nonsense," laughed De Vigne. "I have given bracelets to many other women, Alma, but none of them thought they had any need to feel any gratitude to me. The gratitude they thought was due to *them*, for having allowed me to offer them the gift!"

He spoke with something of a sneer, from the memory of how—to him, at least—women, high and low, had ever been cheap, and worthless as most cheap things are; and the words cast a chill over his listener. For the first time the serpent entered into Alma's Eden—entered, as in Mil-

ton's apologue, with the first dawning knowledge of passion. Unshed tears sprang into her eyes, making them flash and gleam as brilliantly as the jewels in the ornaments he had given her.

"If you did not give them from kindness," she said, passionately, "take them back. My happiness in them is gone."

"Silly child!" said De Vigne, half smiling at her vehement tones. "Should I have given them to you if I had not cared to do so? On the contrary, I am always glad to give you any pleasure, if I can. But do you suppose, Alma, that I have gone all my life without giving bracelets to any one till I gave them to you?"

Alma laughed, but she looked, half vexed, up in his face even still:

"No, I do not, Sir Folko; but you should not give them to me *as* you gave them to other women, any more than you should class me with other women. You have told me you did not?"

"My dear Alma, I cannot puzzle out all your wonderful distinctions and definitions," interrupted De Vigne, hastily, half laughing himself. "Have you enjoyed the evening as much as you anticipated?"

"Oh, it is delightful!" cried the little lady, with that quick change of tone, the result probably of the combination of vivacity and sensitiveness in her nature which produced her rapid alternation from sorrow to mirth, and her extreme susceptibility to external impressions.

De Vigne raised his eyebrows, and interrupted her again, somewhat unwarrantably:

"You are a finished coquette, Alma."

Her blue eyes opened wide under their black lashes:

"Sir Folko!—I?"

"Yes, you. I am not finding fault with you for it. All

women are who can be. I only wonder where, in your seclusion, you have learned all those pretty wiles and ways that women, versed in society from their childhood, fail to acquire. Who has taught you all those dangerous tricks, from whom have you imitated your skill in captivating Curly and Castleton and Severn, and all those other men, however different their styles or tastes? You are an accomplished flirt, petite, and I congratulate you on your proficiency."

He spoke with most unnecessary bitterness, much more than he was conscious of, and certainly much more than he ought to have used, for the Little Tressillian was just as much of a coquette—if you like to call it so—and no more of one, than De Vigne in reality liked; for he preferred, infinitely, spirited and attractive women, and, indeed, measured women by their power of fascination. But now the devil of jealousy had entered into him unknown to himself, and he spoke to her with a cold satirical hauteur, such as Alma had never had from him.

Her eyes flashed, her lips quivered a little; Alma was not a woman to sit down tranquilly under injustice; her nature was too passionate not to be indignant under accusation, though it was at the same time much too tender not to forgive it as rapidly where she loved the offender.

"For shame, Sir Folko!" she cried, vehemently. Fortunately the band was far too loud for her voice to be heard by the other waltzers, though, as her forehead rested on his shoulder while they waltzed, he could catch every word. "You are cruelly unjust: you know as well as I do that you do not believe what you say, though Heaven knows *why* you say it! I am not aware that I have any 'wiles and ways'—as you so kindly term them—but I do know that no one has 'taught' them to me. What I think I say; what I feel I tell people; if I am happy, I do not

conceal it. I enjoy talking to gentlemen—they are very agreeable and very amusing, and I do not think it necessary to deny it; and I should have trusted you—a man of the world who piques himself upon his keen-sightedness—to have read me aright. ‘Coquette!’ I have heard you use that word to women you despise. Coquette, I have heard you say, means one to whom all men are equal. I thank you greatly for your kind opinion of me!”

“Hush, hush, Alma! Heaven knows that was far from my thoughts! Forgive me, petite; I meant nothing unkind. I know you have no artifices or affectations, and I should never attribute them to you. Let nothing I say vex you. If you knew all the shams and manoeuvres I have come across, you would not wonder that I am skeptical and suspicious, and sometimes perhaps unjust.”

He spoke kindly, gently, almost fondly. He was angry with himself for having spoiled her unclouded pleasure. She looked up in his face with a saddened, reproachful tenderness, which had never been in her eyes before, different to their impetuous vexation, different still to their frank, affectionate confidence:

“Yes; but trust *me* at least, Sir Folko, if you doubt all the world?”

“I do!”

He spoke in a low whisper, his moustache touching her golden hair, her heart throbbing against his, her breath upon his cheek, his hand closing tight upon hers in the caress of the waltz, and with the voluptuous swell of the music, the tender and passionāte light of the eyes that were lifted to his, for the first time there awoke, and trembled in them both, the dawn of that passion which the one had never before known, which to the other had been so fierce and fatal a curse.

At that moment the music ceased. De Vigne gave her

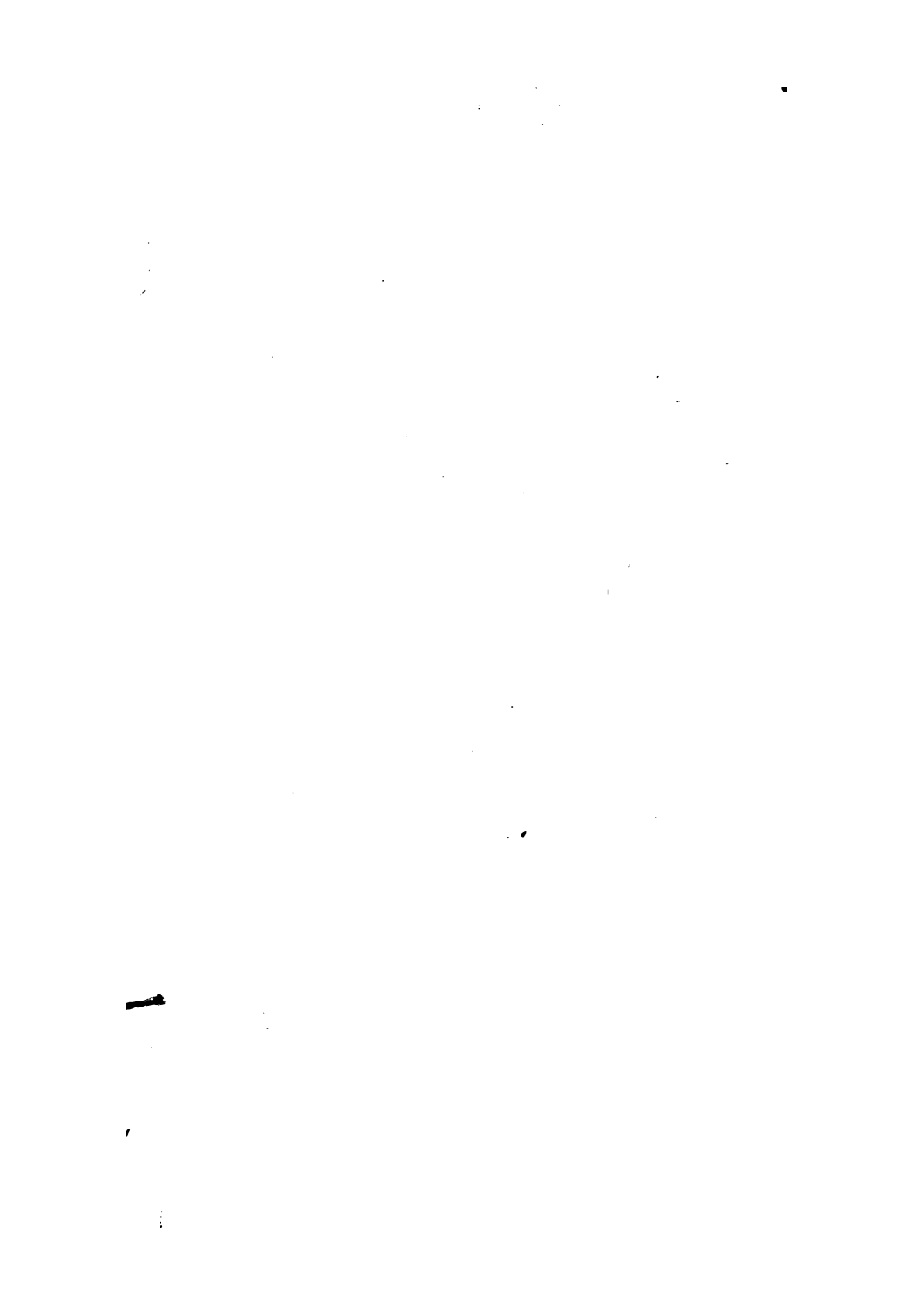
his arm in silence, and soon after seated himself by her on one of the couches, while other men came round her, taking ices and talking the usual ball-room chit-chat, and the Little Tressillian shone with increased brilliance now that her "Sir Folko" was beside her. It was strange how much that single evening did for Alma: she was admired, courted, followed; she learnt her own power, she received the myrtle crown due to her own attractions; to the grace and talent of Nature she seemed to acquire the grace and talent of Society, and to the charming and winning ways of her girlhood she added the witchery, wit, and fascination of a woman of the world. In that one night she grew tenfold more attractive than before; she was like a bird, who never sings so well till he has tried his wings.

She fascinated unconsciously away De Vigne's reason, prudence, and resolves, as woman's witchery had ever done. Without thinking why or wherefore, she bewitched him; without remembering his sage remark to me, that, "considering the reports already circulated concerning them, she was much better without his attentions," he gave himself up to the influence of the hour. He eclipsed, as he easily could, Curly, Castleton, Tom Severn, and all the other men; he waltzed with her often, he took her into the drawing-room and introduced her to one or two of the most celebrated men present, and talked with her and them animatedly, brilliantly, epigrammatically, with that apropos wit and keen, polished satire, in which no one, when he was in good spirits, could ever surpass De Vigne.

I do not believe that around Madame de Déffand's fauteuil, or in the salons of Gore House, could have been heard more sparkling conversation than that which scintillated from the group in Lowndes Square drawing-room, of which Violet, Madame de la Vieillecour, and the Little Tressillian were the center, and round which De Vigne,

Sabretasche, and several of the beaux esprits and the esprits forts of our time were gathered. As great a charm as beauty had over his senses, had intellect over De Vigne's mind; he had never rested till he won the one, he would have gone anywhere to find the other. I had always thought that if he were ever won through both, he would never give up the love, cost him what it might. That Alma's talents were now dazzling him, as the Trefusis's exterior charms, and the charms of many others, had done before her, it was easy to see, and there were in his eyes, when they dwelt upon her, the mingled softness and fire which were sure signs of his olden delirium stealing upon him.

Violet had promised, when at St. Crucis, to send their carriage for Alma; but when the time came, her mother had snappishly refused to dispatch her roans out on any such errand, and Violet had had recourse to the Colonel, begging him to lend her one of his carriages, to enable her to keep her promise. Sabretasche, who would have fulfilled, or tried to fulfill, the most impossible desires of his fiancée, of course consented to so trifling a request, and Violet had sent his brougham and her own maid—that most good-natured and charming of soubrettes—Justine, for the Little Tressillian; for Violet had one great merit, if she did a thing at all she did it well; and in all the whirl and gayety of her life she never forgot a promise or neglected a kindness. Sabretasche's brougham was accordingly there to take Alma back to Richmond; and not even Lady Ela, or Mrs. Tite, or Madame la Duchesse, had more men anxious for the pleasure of taking them to their carriages, than the little débutante. Curly's soft glance and words pleaded hard for the distinction; Tom Severn would fain have had it; Castleton tried hard to give her his arm; but De Vigne kept them all off, and took her



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